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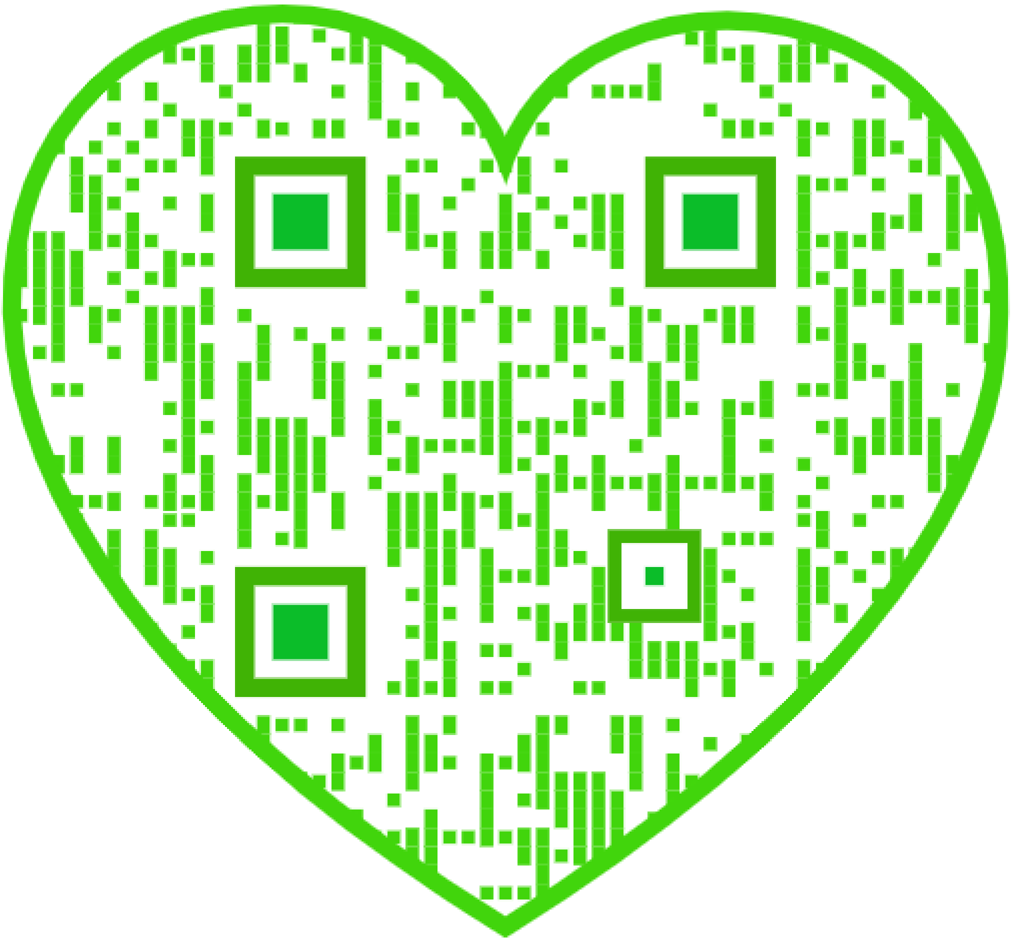

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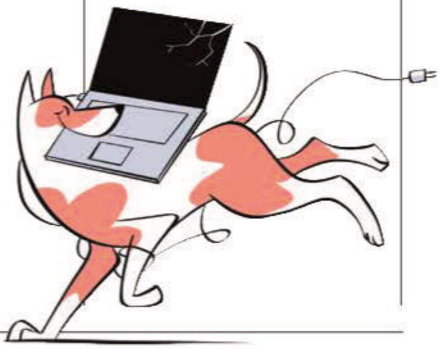

COVER IMAGE: MUSIC CITY AERIAL/ JASON HOFFMAN

EDITOR'S LETTER

HOWDY, Y'ALL! Get ready for a boot-stomping, country singing romp through Music City with this month's cover story on Nashville. From the late-night dive bars spilling onto Honky Tonk Highway to the hallowed stage of the Grand Ole Opry, this city knows a thing or two about how to entertain. Dive into the action on page 48.

Sadly, I haven't personally experienced the city myself, but I did catch the bug from hit TV series *Nashville* in the 2010s. I binged the first season on a flight from Hong Kong to Sydney. It was arguably one of my best flights ever – and all down to the IFE.

Inflight entertainment has come a long way, from a single screen per cabin to personal entertainment hubs in the sky. Today, you can browse hundreds of shows and movies, curate your playlist (no judgment if it's all Taylor Swift songs) and even catch live news. Turn to page 54 for more.

Before you settle on your movie pick though, be warned: you might find yourself getting a little emotional up there. In this month's column, deputy editor Hannah Brandler explores why we all become blubbering wrecks at 35,000 feet. (If you are feeling sentimental, you might want to skip our interview with F1 legend Jackie Stewart. His career and life story are nothing short of inspiring – but prepare to have your heartstrings pulled as he shares insights into his incredible journey.)

Caught some dust in your eye? Ahem. Let's shift gears: cars, Vikings and technology should do it. On page 60, we road trip across the rugged Danish landscape on a fascinating adventure that brings together history and modern innovation.

Elsewhere, we've got the latest news, reviews and expert travel tips – don't miss how to snag a free reward leg with United on page 30. Enjoy the issue!

Tamsin Cocks

Tamsin Cocks
Editor

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JEREMY TAYLOR
Jeremy is a freelance motoring and travel journalist and presenter. His work appears in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Tatler* and various other titles around the world. On page 60, he explores Denmark in a Polestar 4, while searching for Bluetooth.

RICHARD LORD
Richard is a freelance journalist based in Hong Kong. A former editor for *The Wall Street Journal* and editorial director of Haymarket Asia, he also writes for *South China Morning Post* and *Tatler Asia*. On page 66, he investigates whether working from home is becoming a thing of the past.

ALLY WYBREW
Ally is a Gozo-based writer who, between diving shipwrecks and seeking out Malta's new bars, writes about travel for titles including *Time Out*, *The Independent* and *High Life*. On page 37, she explores ancient forts, Omani architecture and captivating souks in Muscat.

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Inbox

Readers share first-hand knowledge, experiences and ideas

SWISS SILENCE
A two-hour delayed SWISS flight from Heathrow to Geneva in January was inconvenient and the response from the airline's customer service was perfunctory. As the delay was under three hours, my request for compensation was denied under regulation EC261/2004 (the EU Air Passenger Rights Regulation that defines rules for compensation to air passengers, in the event of a cancellation or denied boarding). However, a second email from SWISS confused matters by asking for my bank account details, which I found very odd. With fraud prevalent these days, I emailed the airline for an explanation and further details, but it never replied. I found this unacceptable.
Mark Peaker, London

SWISS replies:
We regret that the flight departed with a delay and apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused your reader.

MISSED THE BOAT
Last year I planned a cruise trip with my family. We flew Emirates (EK383/EK255) from Hong Kong to Barcelona via Dubai – the cruise was embarking in Barcelona. I decided to book business class for a more relaxed long-haul flight.

After a smooth transit and flight, we finally arrived in Barcelona to find out that everyone's baggage had been left behind at Dubai Airport. The local ground staff said that we would not even get it back the next day. There was only one Emirates staff member handling us, which led to a messy queue of passengers trying to complete baggage claim forms. The airline was unable to provide an explanation or tell us when and where we would have our baggage returned.

Luckily, we had a few days before boarding the cruise, but we were still worried about how we would get on in the city without our personal belongings. We discovered that our travel insurance only covered the purchase of essential clothing and toiletries with limited reimbursements. We received no further notification and details from Emirates for two days. Finally, after two and a half days (the night before the cruise), our baggage was delivered to our hotel.

If travelling for a cruise, I recommend that you arrive a few days before embarkation in case of uncertainty.
Amii Lyn Kam, Aberdeen, Hong Kong

Emirates replies:
We are sorry to hear about Ms Kam's complaint. Our customer care team has been in direct contact with her and can confirm the bags were delivered on 22 April. We regret the inconvenience caused and have offered Ms Kam Skywards Miles as a gesture of goodwill.

STAR LETTER

BA-yond compare

Like all frequent flyers, I have experienced the full gamut of lost luggage and surprise upgrades, surly service and exceptional attentiveness. For me, it's what happens on the ground that counts most, and I wanted to share a positive example of customer service from British Airways.

I unfortunately received news at 4.45am that my mother had died. Despite being prepared for this, I was still shocked. I phoned BA as soon as the line opened and explained that I needed two flights (international and domestic). I would go any class, but it had to be that day!

The BA person heard the mixture of urgency and distress in my voice and asked if I was OK. Being a trifle histrionic, I cracked and explained the reason for my call. The staff member listened carefully, slowed down and explained his solution. It was not a simple task: it was high season, there weren't many options, and the connecting flight was particularly problematic. He booked all flights, used my air miles and even got an upgrade on one of the legs. I was in a flood of tears at this point and could hardly express my gratitude. You don't get this with all airlines.
Adrian Furnham, London

STAR PRIZE

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FORUM

AIRPORTS FURTHEST AWAY FROM THEIR NAMED DESTINATION

CWOODWARD
I read this morning that the large Barcelona-Reus Airport is over 100km from the city, which by any standards is a long way to travel to your hotel after a long flight. It would be useful to know the major airports that are very far away from the cities whose name they carry. In Asia, I recall the first time I travelled to Kuala Lumpur and needed a costly taxi to travel the almost 70 km to my hotel.

IMISSCONCORDE
If memory serves me right, the worst example used to be Ryanair flights to Copenhagen, which went to Malmö Airport 65km away!

LETSFLYNOW
Frankfurt Hahn is a good 125km from Frankfurt. Of course, Ryanair flies there. A bus ride to Frankfurt takes over two hours!

JONATHANCOHEN9
This is an interesting thread. There are two that spring to mind that I have experienced on more than one occasion. Narita International Airport is about 80km from Tokyo, obviously Haneda Airport is closer, and Incheon Airport is 50km from Seoul. Not great after a long flight, and also the traffic from both airports to their respective city centres is horrendous.

NEVERECONOMY
La Tontouta International Airport in New Caledonia is almost 50km from Nouméa. The whole landmass is only about 400km long – they had to find a piece of flat land for the airport. Can be a bit tricky if you are last through immigration as all the taxis are gone!

HYPHEN33
You will often find that the reason for the lengthy distance to the city is cheap landing fees, and most flights into these airports with cheaper landing fees are low-cost carriers (LCCs). So, if you want a cheap ticket to Barcelona, then your LCC will actually land very close to the beach town of Reus – many kilometres away from Barcelona. Furthermore, you will never find a Qatar Airways, Delta or American Airlines etc anywhere near Barcelona-Reus Airport. An exception to the rule is the relatively new Istanbul airport. That huge monstrosity of an airport built in the middle of nowhere is miles and miles from Istanbul city centre.

‘Airports often do not make it clear to their customers that they are in for a long secondary journey’

CWOODWARD
The point that I was making was the lack of upfront clear transparent advice from airlines, who often do not make it clear to their customers that they are in for a long secondary journey from the landing point to reach their expected destination – in short, misrepresentation.

CHEERUP
I'm not sure it can be construed as misrepresentation since the 'sub town' – London Southend for example – is often mentioned in the airport name. Perhaps if it was labelled as 'London Airport' there would be an argument.

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AVIATION
Air France unveils La Première

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Eurostar faces competition

SUSTAINABILITY
IHG's first net zero hotel

Dispatch

The latest business travel updates

HOT TICKET

Osaka

The greatest show on Earth heads to town

WORDS **TAMARA HINSON**

OSAKA MIGHT BE famous for its food scene but in 2025 it has been thrust into the spotlight for another reason: Expo 2025, which kicked off in April and concludes on 13 October. The event takes place on Osaka's Yumeshima Island, with some 28 million visitors expected to attend. The theme for this year's expo is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives", but what does this entail? Forums and conferences covering everything from AI to sustainable urbanisation →

IMAGE ©EXPO 2025

Continued from previous page

(carbon neutrality and digital innovations will be major focuses); a sprawling pavilion area with themed zones dedicated to saving, empowering and connecting lives; and dozens of individual pavilions built by various countries, regions of Japan and companies such as Mitsubishi and Bandai. One of the most spectacular pavilions is the Red Cross' cinema dome, where visitors can learn about the importance of humanitarian aid.

The entire site has been designed with accessibility in mind. It's surrounded by a 2km circular Grand Ring, which has been built using timber construction techniques used in Japanese temples, and doubles as a main, covered route for visitors. Electric buses, meanwhile, whisk visitors around the exhibition.

If you're looking for somewhere to stay, then book into Hilton's newly opened Waldorf Astoria Osaka – the brand's Japanese debut. Located in the city's Umekita District, steps from the JR Osaka Station, the 252-room hotel features design by celebrated architect André Fu and promises a medley of stateside Art Deco aesthetic and Japanese accents – plus four dining venues, including an outpost of the New York flagship's Peacock Alley.

DID YOU KNOW? The Grand Ring has been recognised by Guinness World Records as the "largest wooden architectural structure" in the world

TOP: The Grand Ring **INSET:** Waldorf Astoria Osaka

LCC loyalty schemes

Low-cost carriers are introducing their take on frequent flyer programmes

LOW-COST CARRIERS (LCCs) are increasingly introducing paid-for membership schemes offering benefits for a fixed fee – generally for a 12-month period. This way, budget airlines can lock in customers for a year. While these might seem like a good deal, there are caveats to consider.

Ryanair recently launched its £79/€79 scheme named 'Prime'. Subscribers benefit from free seat reservations, travel insurance and access to a member-exclusive seat sale every month. The airline says that members who fly 12 times a year can save up to five times the value of the annual subscription, while flying three times a year can save €105.

EasyJet first launched its easyJet Plus membership card in 2008, which is currently priced at £249 per year. The higher cost is reflected in the increased benefits – fast-track security, speedy boarding, a large cabin bag, the option to take an earlier return flight at no extra cost, and a free Upfront or Extra Legroom seat. EasyJet also recently added a business package. Companies can now purchase up to 250 memberships, and will receive one free membership for every ten purchased.

Wizz Air meanwhile has two schemes. The MultiPass plan allows customers to lock-in the price of flights and ancillary charges for 12 months, eliminating the heightened fares when booking last minute. Once a month, subscribers can book a one-way flight for £59.99 or a return for £199.99.

Most interesting is its 'All You Can Fly' membership, aimed at the "spontaneous" traveller. For €599 a year, members can book flights for €9.99. But bookings can only be made up to three days before, there's no cabin or hold bag included, and seats are subject to availability.

> 'While these might seem like a good deal, there are several caveats to consider'

Ryanair's 'Prime' scheme bears no relation to Amazon's delivery service

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WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON
MARK CASWELL

Fiji Airways celebrates joining the alliance

Fiji Airways joins oneworld

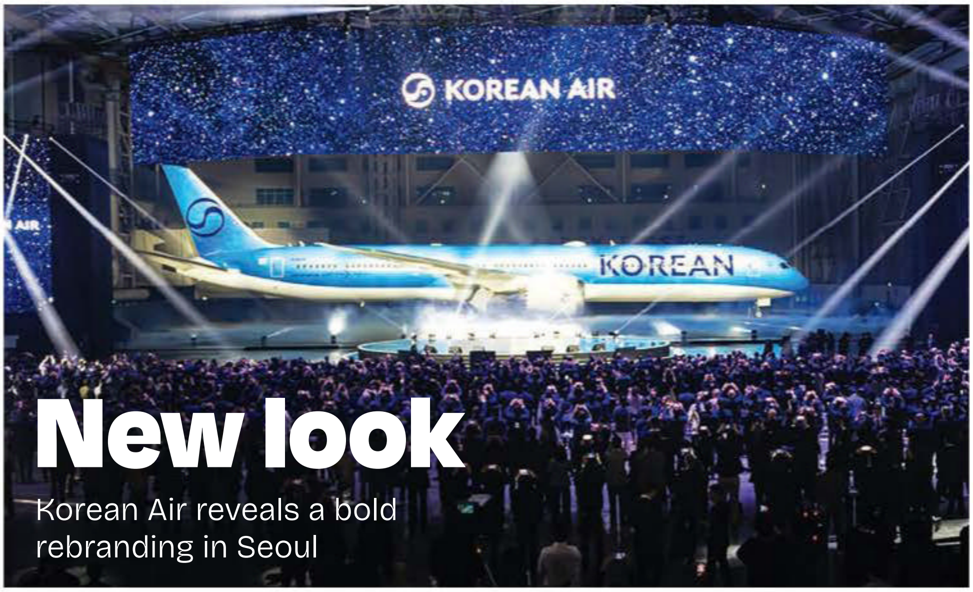
FIJI AIRWAYS HAS officially joined oneworld as the 14th full alliance member, having held oneworld Connect status since 2018. As of April, top tier customers have access to a network of nearly 700 airport lounges globally, as well as priority check-in and boarding, and the ability to earn and redeem miles, as well as tier points. The carrier's subsidiary, Fiji Link, is also joining forces with oneworld as an affiliate airline, giving customers access to a greater range of domestic destinations and regional connections, including Tonga, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Andre Viljoen, managing director and CEO of Fiji Airways, said: "As a full member, we are excited to offer our customers even greater benefits and seamless connectivity across the extensive oneworld network. We look forward to welcoming more oneworld customers onboard to experience the beauty of Fiji and the exceptional service of Fiji Airways."

SOFT LAUNCH

Start-up carrier Global Airlines plans to launch "special" flights this month, with two services from Glasgow and Manchester to New York. Passengers will board the company's A380 aircraft, featuring overhauled cabins and limited-edition amenity kits. If all goes to plan, the first flight will leave Glasgow on 15 May and the Manchester flight on 21 May. Since Global does not yet have an operating licence, these are one-off return flights operated by charter airline Hi Fly.

WORDS
ENRIQUE PERRELLA



New look

Korean Air reveals a bold rebranding in Seoul

KOREAN AIR HAS unveiled its first major brand overhaul in more than four decades, showcasing a refreshed logo, modernised livery and an all-new inflight experience package. The rebranding was introduced at a grand event in Seoul, where a Boeing 787-10 debuted the airline's sleek new look.

The redesigned *taegeuk* symbol, now in a deeper shade of blue, pays homage to Korea's cultural roots, inspired by the elegant motion of the traditional *sangmo* dance. An updated logotype features refined curves reminiscent of Korean brushstrokes, merging tradition with a contemporary aesthetic. As Korean Air prepares to fully merge with its longtime competitor, Asiana Airlines, Kenneth Chang, the airline's executive vice president and chief marketing officer, notes how this transformation "reflects both our heritage and our vision for the future."

The revamp extends to the carrier's inflight offerings too, including the introduction of a luxurious dining experience curated by chef Seakyeong Kim of Seoul's Cesta restaurant. First and Prestige class passengers will enjoy gourmet selections such as octopus *nurungji* rice and beef brisket bibimbap. Such dishes will be served on Bernardaud china with Christofle cutlery.

Additionally, premium class passengers can enjoy Frette bedding and pyjamas, paired with Eco World's air-coil mattress and amenity kits by British brand Graff.

Korean Air is also investing in lounges and planning to triple its space at airports. Upcoming openings include a Million Miler Lounge and Business Lounge at Seoul Incheon in August, with additional lounges at LAX and JFK scheduled for next year.

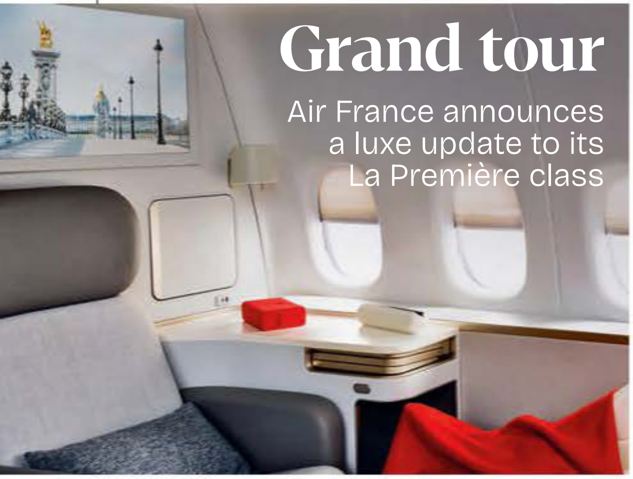
The airline will also introduce a brand new premium economy product alongside private first class suites.

FROM ABOVE
The new Korean Air livery on a Boeing 787-10; inflight dining options

Initially debuting on retrofitted Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, the premium economy seats will also feature on new Airbus A350s and Boeing 777-9s. Each aircraft will offer 20 to 25 premium economy seats, with enhanced comfort for long-haul travellers.

"We're committed to setting a new standard in premium air travel," said Korean Air's chairman Walter Cho. "These upgrades align with our vision of providing exceptional experiences both in the air and on the ground." With a refreshed identity and improved offerings, the airline is positioning itself for a new era.

FRENCH FLAIR



Grand tour

Air France announces a luxe update to its La Première class

THE WAIT IS over: Air France has finally unveiled its reimagined La Première suite, and the airline's premium passengers are in for a treat. The new cabin, available on select Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, will offer an exclusive and intimate experience with only four suites per plane.

Passengers will enjoy nearly 3.5 sqm of space, with a plush leather seat that converts into a fully flat bed, a chaise longue, and spacious table ideal for dining or working.

The suites are enclosed by Air France's signature floor-to-ceiling curtains for complete privacy, while five large windows with adjustable shades provide natural light. Refined materials such as full-grain leather and soft wool complement the airline's grey and red palette.

There is also plenty of storage, with a sliding drawer for carry-on bags and a dedicated shoe compartment.

When it comes to entertainment, Air France is going all out by offering not one but two 32-inch ultra high-definition 4K screens, which can be viewed from the main seat or rear-facing chaise, as well as Denon noise-reducing headphones and Bluetooth connectivity. Complimentary Starlink wifi will also ensure seamless connectivity.

IMAGES AIR FRANCE

Now boarding: the A-list

ReLAX. Our LA Clubhouse is now open.

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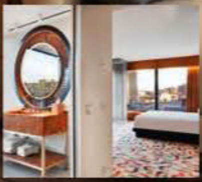
New openings

Our pick of three exciting hotel additions around the world

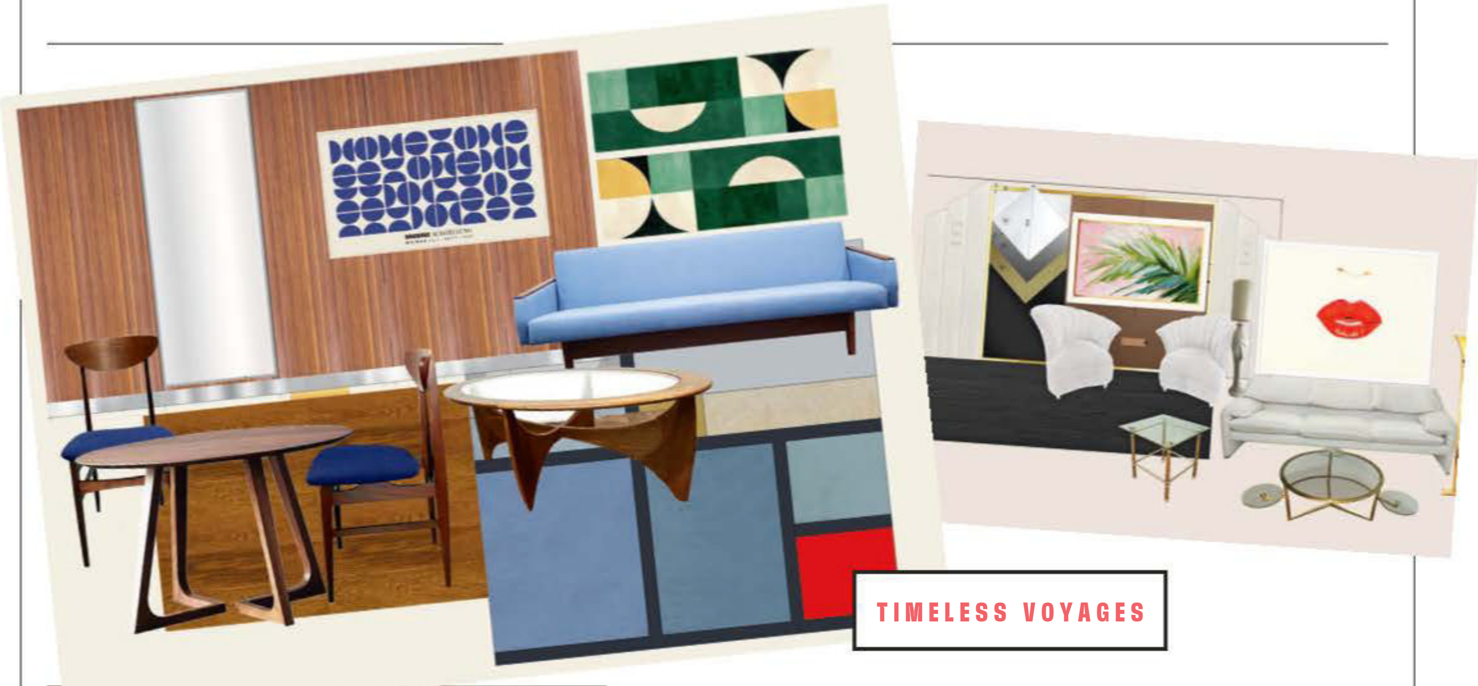
Capella Taipei
Capella Hotels and Resorts has launched in Taiwan with a sanctuary-like hotel in the Dunhua North Road district of Taipei. The hotel boasts light-filled interiors by celebrated designer André Fu, complete with 86 rooms and suites, plus five dining venues and a spa. If you don't secure one of the rooms with a private pool terrace, head to the communal pool on the 14th floor, complete with a backdrop of the Taipei skyline – or camp out in The Living Room and hear from local historians.

Miiro Templeton Garden, London
Independent lifestyle brand Miiro has debuted in London with a hotel in Earl's Court, complete with a leafy landscaped garden ideal for the spring months. The 156-room Templeton Garden features café-meets-deli Pip's, modern British restaurant Pippin's, and cocktail bar Sprout. Further facilities include a library, gym and Refresh Room – a space with changing rooms, showers and toiletries, ideal if you need to spruce up before your room is ready. Sophisticated interiors by London studio Thurstan include upcycled materials and antique furniture, plus calming colour schemes and Le Labo toiletries.

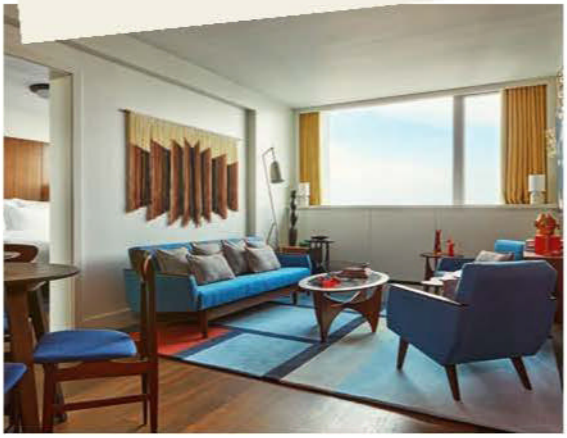
The Standard, Brussels
The Standard brand debuts in Brussels this month, located within the mixed-use ZIN complex in the city's Northern Quarter. Design by the in-house team plus Belgian firms Jaspers-Eyers Architects and Bernard Dubois Architects combines a post-war brutalist exterior with interiors boasting rich, warm colours, custom-made furnishings and wooden millwork. The 28-storey hotel offers 200 rooms and suites, complete with the brand's first extended-stay offering, plus a botanical garden and three dining venues – including a restaurant and bar with panoramic views of the city.



WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER



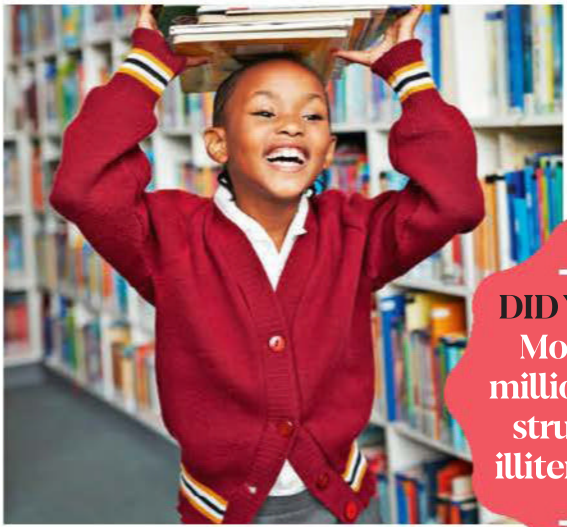
TIMELESS VOYAGES



Lore Group's riverside hotel Sea Containers London on the South Bank is reviving the golden age of cruising with its four new 'cabin suites' inspired by different eras. The Edwardian, Art Deco, Mid-Century and Dynasty suites are decked out in antique and vintage furnishings from sustainable marketplace Vinterior, and complete with a collection of period-appropriate books curated by Phaidon, plus specially bottled cocktails crafted by the hotel's award-winning bar Lyaness. We're onboard!

A REWARDING CHAPTER

IHG'S VIGNETTE COLLECTION has announced a global partnership with the World Literacy Foundation, supporting the foundation's mission to eliminate illiteracy by 2040. To help the NGO reach this goal, the brand is funding the installation of pop-up libraries in Kuwait City, Lisbon and Brisbane, within the locality of the brand's Arabella Beach Hotel Kuwait, Convent Square Lisbon and Hotel X Brisbane Fortitude Valley respectively.



The Vignette Collection is also investing in literacy support programmes, providing free access to education materials at a Liverpool-based school, close to the brand's The Halyard Liverpool hotel, as well as at a hospital in Washington DC near the Yours Truly DC hotel. Over in Columbia, the brand has also committed funds to support the NGO's aid initiatives in conflict-affected communities.

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 754 million people are struggling with illiteracy globally.

IMAGES JAMES MCDONALD; COURTESY OF CAPELLA HOTELS AND RESORTS; ZOAN; KLAUS VEDFELT; COURTESY OF THE STANDARD

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Be inspired at **virginia.org**

LUXURY ACCOMODATIONS

WILLIAMSBURG INN

Williamsburg, VA

Experience Forbes Five-Star, AAA Five Diamond luxury at the iconic Williamsburg Inn. Regarded among the world's great hotels, Williamsburg Inn in Williamsburg, Virginia, is the crown jewel of Colonial Williamsburg hotels. The Inn offers 62 guestrooms and suites and has hosted a wealth of heads-of-state yet pampers each and every guest with the royal treatment. For many, it is a resort destination in itself. Gourmet dining, outdoor pools, tennis courts, award-winning golf, and a fitness club complete with spa services create a memorable resort experience. Golf enthusiasts are particularly awe-inspired by the adjoining Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45-holes of championship golf by legendary designers Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Rees Jones. Enjoy access to world-class dining, wellness and recreation, and spa amenities in addition to discount admission to Colonial Williamsburg and exclusive guest benefits.

COLONIALWILLIAMSBURGHOTELS.COM

RITZ-CARLTON AT TYSONS CORNER

McLean, VA

Celebrating local treasures is at the heart of The Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner, where classic Virginia artists, traditions and cuisine stand proudly alongside contemporary luxuries. Here, guests can easily access the area's best offerings, from high-end shopping at the attached Tysons Galleria to iconic attractions in nearby Washington, DC. Tysons Corner is the quintessential example of a well-balanced city. Drawing inspiration from its surroundings, this luxury hotel offers an experience both comforting and decadent with thoughtfully appointed guest rooms and suites, Club Lounge and polished event space. Enjoy robust selection of exciting experiences, including wine tastings and live music at ENTYSE along with special tea and holiday events for children and an array of soothing therapies at The Ritz-Carlton Spa.

RITZCARLTON.COM

VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LOVERS

FAST TRACK Rail operators are vying for a chance at the Tunnel

eurostar
EURO TUNNEL
30 YEARS

RAIL CORNER

Channel crossing

A third competitor sets its sights on the Channel Tunnel

START-UP RAIL operator Gemini Trains has announced plans to launch a service through the Channel Tunnel, making it the third firm to voice such ambitions, alongside Virgin Trains and Spanish start-up Evolyn.

All three companies have applied to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) for access to Temple Mills International maintenance depot, a facility for high-speed trains using London St Pancras – vital for any operator trying to compete with Eurostar. At the end of March, the ORR said that the depot "would be able if required to accommodate additional trains" following an independent report into the matter.

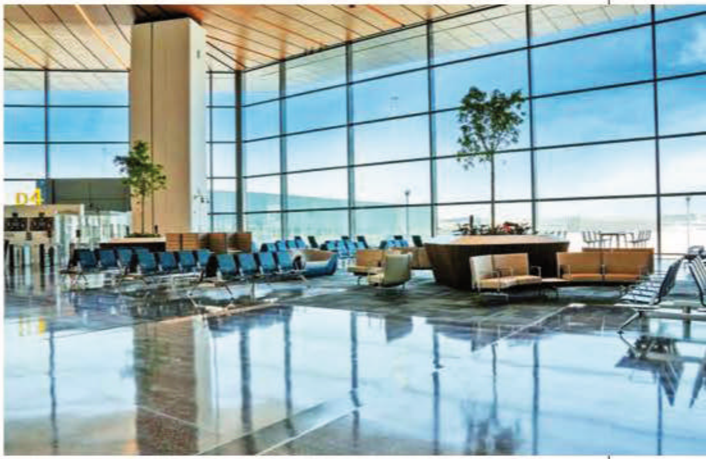
While it waits for approval, Gemini has said it aims to use "brand new cutting-edge trains and a fresh approach to ticketing" with initial plans to operate services between London St Pancras, Paris and Brussels, while also considering "further exciting destinations".

> 'Gemini aims to use "brand new cutting-edge trains and a fresh approach to ticketing"'

Gemini's CEO, Adrian Quine, commented that, "with a whole new generation now choosing trains over planes, there is a great opportunity to bring real entrepreneurial flair and dynamism with competitive fares to Europe's premier route." Let's wait and see if there's enough demand for all three of the potential newcomers.

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON, ALEX MCWHIRTER, MARK CASWELL, JONNY CLARK

Airport expansion



DOHA'S HAMAD INTERNATIONAL Airport has unveiled its state-of-the-art concourses D and E, situated either side of The Orchard (the airport's tropical indoor garden) – a simple train or buggy ride away from the check-in area, or a five-minute walk.

Often applauded for its contemporary interiors and amenities, Hamad is seen as one of the world's key hub airports, however it's dwarfed by the likes of Dubai and Istanbul International Airports, which can handle more than twice the traffic.

But, as the home of Qatar Airways, the airport has been operating at near maximum capacity, with many passengers having to utilise remote stands and buses to connect between gates. While the launch of these new concourses doesn't completely eliminate this need, they go a long way in alleviating the inconvenience of bus gates.

New technology also streamlines the passenger experience, with features including self-boarding gates, smart systems such as swift document verification, and accessible features including hearing loops, barrier-free pathways, plus spacious seating areas with power sockets at every seat.

NEED TO KNOW

- The new concourses offer a total of 51,000 sqm of terminal space
- Increased airport capacity to over 65 million passengers annually
- 17 new aircraft 'contact' gates, totalling 62 'contact' gates
- Reduction in the amount of bus journeys by almost 1,000 per day
- The terminal has grown 14% in footprint
- Nine new retail and F&B venues, increasing retail space by 2,700 sqm

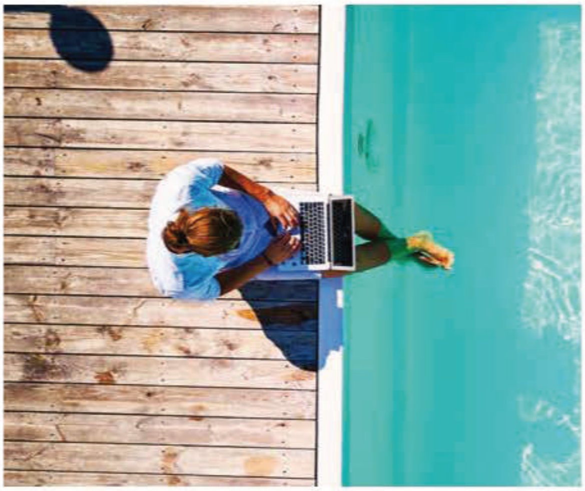
WHEN AIR MEETS RAIL

AUSTRIAN RAIL OPERATOR ÖBB has become Star Alliance's second rail partner, following in the footsteps of Deutsche Bahn. Customers flying into and from Vienna Airport on one of the alliance's member carriers (16 of which operate at the Austrian airport) are now able to book combined flight and rail tickets to cities including Graz, Linz, Salzburg and Innsbruck.

Customers flying from Vienna can also check-in and collect their boarding pass at one of ÖBB's travel centres within the cities above. Train seat reservations can also be made at the booking stage and customers will earn points or miles for the rail portion of the journey.

With Eurostar and Trenitalia joining SkyTeam last year, and a rise in interest for rail travel, it's likely we'll see more operators making the same move.

TRAVEL TREND WATCH



THE TERM 'BLEISURE' – the practice of tacking holiday days onto business trips – has been around for a while now, but things have taken a turn. 'Reverse bleisure' is the act of taking work calls or scheduling business meetings *during* holidays. Amex GBT surveyed over 1,800 business travellers, and found that the practice is becoming increasingly widespread. The company found that more than half of business travellers done some work while away on holiday (emails from their sunloungers perhaps). The trend is most prevalent among the Gen Z and Millennial generations, who also make up a large portion of digital nomads across the globe. Only about 40% of Gen Xers, meanwhile, have attempted to work during their holiday.

IMAGES ALAMY, ADOBE STOCK

Dining delights

Airports are ramping up flavour profiles and providing more options for time-conscious travellers

A PRIMARY FACTOR for airport diners is speed – nobody wants to dash to the gate before their dessert has arrived. As such, airport "quick service restaurants" are doing a booming trade and are a critical part of modern airport infrastructure.

Typically, they serve cost-friendly meals prepared in a systematic way and packaged so customers can take them away or enjoy quickly at the venue.

According to the *Airport Quick Service Restaurant Market Global Forecast (2025-2034)* by Global Market Insights (GMI), the market value was US$36.8 billion in 2024 and expected to grow to US$56.1 billion by 2034.

As a result, airports are seeing expanded menus and premium, celebrity-backed outlets entering the mix as customers seek quality and unique culinary experiences.

Priority Pass also meets this demand with its Airport Takeout app feature, where members can pre-order pay as you go takeaway options from more than 485 cafes and restaurants in 44 leading airports across the UK and US.

Renowned chefs and gourmet brands also help to capture the attention of premium travellers. Gordon Ramsay's Plane Food, for instance, launched at Heathrow almost 20 years ago, and the renowned chef is now partnering with Travel Food Services to launch six dining outlets at Indian airports by 2027, while famed Turkish chef Nusret Gökçe (aka Saltbae) opened Saltbae Burger in 2023, with plans to expand to ten airports.

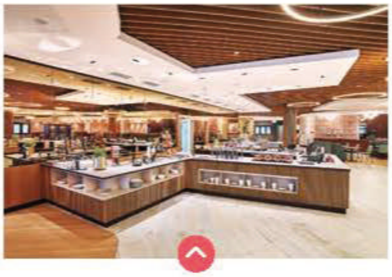
Plant-based options are also on the rise, catering to health-conscious customers, and more planet-friendly practices. According to the 2025 GMI report, 57% of airport diners consider sustainability when choosing where to eat, while restaurants are investing more in eco-friendly back-of-house operations, from waste management to biodegradable packaging.

On the technological side, self-service kiosks are being introduced at airports to speed things up by reducing wait times, while also allowing customers to order from multiple brands. Robots are also increasingly being deployed, both to help with food prep in the kitchens and the delivery of dishes to customers.

> Saltbae Burger opened in Istanbul Grand Airport in 2023, with plans to expand to ten international airports

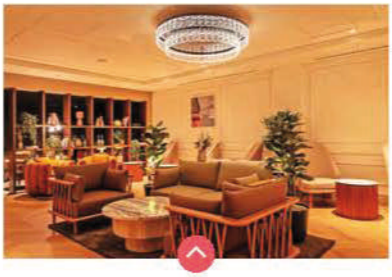
LOCAL FLAVOUR

Food is an important part of travel, and airport lounges are starting to curate F&B offerings that give a sense of place



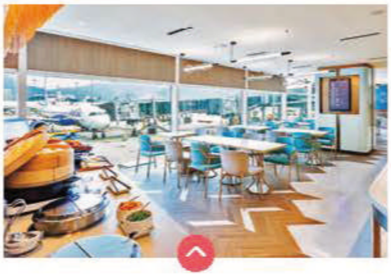
VIENNA LOUNGE, TERMINAL 1, VIENNA AIRPORT, AUSTRIA

Find cold cuts of meat and cheese, a salad bar, and a wide range of traditional desserts in the Viennese cafe, including the classic apple strudel. You'll also be able to enjoy Austrian beers and wines, including an Austrian sparkling wine.



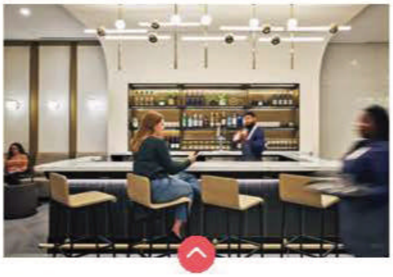
NO1 LOUNGE, LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL 2

Seasonal food and premium British produce reigns supreme at the new lounge in The Queen's Terminal. Passengers will find hot and cold dishes, from pastries to salads, plus Fever Tree Tonics for a classic British G&T.



KYRA LOUNGE, HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Tuck into comforting classic Chinese congee and Cantonese dim sum, or iconic Hong Kong street food like fish siu mai and traditional curried fishballs. Pair your meal with the 'Fragrant Harbour' cocktail, inspired by Hong Kong's trading port history.



THE CLUB MDW, CHICAGO MIDWAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The Club MDW celebrates local food and drink with a menu that reflects Chicago's vibrant dining scene alongside craft beers from Revolutionary Brewing and Two Brothers Brewing, plus spirits from the Chicago-based KOVAL Distillery.

BITE-SIZED DINING

64% of travellers prioritise dining as part of the airport experience

61% are interested in paying for premium food and beverage options

58% are interested in paying extra for a full table dining service

2% of travellers never eat or drink at the airport

Source: Airport Dimensions Airport Experience Research 2024

WHAT TO EAT AND DRINK

PRE-FLIGHT NUTRITION TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

Herbal tea
A soothing camomile or fresh peppermint tea will help you relax for your flight and avoid dehydration.

Complex carbs
Whole grains, brown rice and quinoa all offer slow burning energy release without spiking your blood sugar – ideal for long periods of sitting.

Lean protein
Whether you go for turkey or tofu, light proteins will support energy levels and muscle function during your flight.

Fruits
Boost your immunity with Vitamin C-packed oranges, and enjoy a potassium-rich banana to regulate blood pressure and ward off muscle cramps.

Healthy fats
Nuts, seeds and avocados are great at helping you stay full and easing digestion.

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK, GETTY IMAGES

Joby
virgin atlantic
Virgin
N544JX

OFF TO A FLYING START

Piloted air taxis may soon soar across our skies

DO YOU FANTASISE about flying cars? Virgin Atlantic is soon to make that dream a reality, partnering with California-based firm Joby to develop air taxi services for regional and city connections from Heathrow and Manchester airports. Joby's eVTOL air taxis can carry up to four passengers (plus the pilot), and are optimised for "rapid, back-to-back flights" up to 100 miles in length. Potential zero-emission journeys include 15-minute flights from Manchester to Leeds and eight-minute services from Heathrow to Canary Wharf.

If you're wondering if it's out of your price range, then fret not – it's expected to be similar to existing premium ground ridesharing options. Joby has applied for approval from the UK's Civil Aviation Authority, and should everything go to plan, customers will be able to reserve seats on Joby aircraft through Virgin's app or website.

Joby has an existing agreement in place with Virgin's joint venture partner and part-owner Delta. The US carrier made a US$60 million equity investment in Joby, with the opportunity to expand this to US$200 million "as the partners achieve substantive milestones on the development and delivery of the service".

WASTE WONDERS

SEVERAL INNOVATIVE COMPANIES are transforming waste into lifestyle products. In the UK, Margate-based design studio Müll Club revamps rubbish into beautiful one-of-a-kind items, ranging from colourful combs to marble-patterned trays and the brand's bestselling zig-zag-shaped soap dishes. Each piece has been created from the likes of milk cartons, pink Vanish pots, yellow Marmite lids, and even Roses and Heroes chocolate tubs (the brighter the better!).

Meanwhile, American accessories brand Rothy's crafts shoes and bags from plastic waste. The LEED Gold certified brand has created a "signature thread" from 100% recycled plastic bottles, used to knit all its products – which also feature ocean-bound marine plastic, collected within 30 miles of coastlines and marine environments.

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER
MARK CASWELL

NO CARBON COPY

IHG Hotels & Resorts has opened its first branded net zero carbon hotel, located within Exeter Science Park – a hub for STEMM businesses. The 142-room voco Zeal Exeter Science Park, developed with Zeal Hotels and Valor Hospitality, operates solely on renewable and solar energy, and boasts a BREEAM Outstanding rating. Solar panel technology ensures the hotel generates more electricity than it consumes every year, while its heating, cooling and cooking are 100% electric. Visitors can even travel there sustainably thanks to its car park with 12 EV charging spots.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF JOBY/VIRGIN ATLANTIC; NICK CALLAGHAN PHOTOGRAPHY; GETTY IMAGES**

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL Younger generations opt for more eco-friendly transport solutions

Slow and steady

Gen Z professionals show a preference for longer, rail-powered business trips

89% are worried about the carbon footprint of business travel

59% fear missing out on opportunities if they reduce their travel

75% would prioritise lower-carbon travel if their employer supported it

37% feel a conflict between career travel and the environmental impact

60% would extend journey times to travel more sustainably

94% say business travel is crucial for career progression

50% feel pressure to choose quicker, cheaper options over low carbon ones due to time and budgets

65% anticipate that business travel will play an even more significant role as their careers progress

30% is the estimated number of Gen Z professionals in the workforce by 2030

SOURCE: TRAINLINE PARTNER SOLUTIONS RESEARCH, CONDUCTED BY CENSUSWIDE WITH 1,001 UK BASED GEN-Z EMPLOYEES (AGED 18-27) THAT TRAVEL FOR BUSINESS.

SPONSORED CONTENT

The business of happiness

Finland's happy capital of **Helsinki** is a renowned destination for all kinds of world-class events, conferences, and corporate experiences

FOR THE EIGHTH YEAR IN A ROW, Finland's been named the happiest country in the world. With its sustainability, immaculate transport and activities, it's no surprise it tops many traveller's bucket-lists. Finland's appeal doesn't stop with holidaymakers, though. Its perfected pace of life also makes for an incredible business destination.

GOING GREEN

In 2024, Helsinki topped the Global Destination Sustainability Index, demonstrating their commitment to environmental and social responsibility. More recently it achieved the Green Destinations GSTC certificate, making it the first city with over half a million residents to do so. Hosting an event here means your environmental targets cover themselves. From zero-waste restaurants to renewable energy-powered boardrooms, every element of your trip will have an eco edge.

MEET YOU THERE

Getting around easily is essential when planning an event. Helsinki ticks this box, too. Travelling from the airport to the city centre only takes 30-minutes by train and 20 by taxi. Plus, city bikes can be used from April to October. Once you're in the centre, the key attractions and a diverse selection of hotels and restaurants await you within walking distance, ideal for a post-event dinner or drinks.

AFTER HOURS

Beyond its business offering, Helsinki's packed with leisure options. From island hopping to sailing and swimming, the 130km shoreline has so many ways to let loose after a long day. Nothing says Helsinki quite like walking into one of its public saunas, cracking open a cold one, and chilling by the seaside – whether it's summer heat or winter sleet. Whatever's on the agenda, Helsinki is perfectly placed to host an extraordinary business trip for you.

Find out more at
meetings@helsinkipartners.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Helsinki, a sustainable city destination; a dream city for foodies; exciting survival suit floating is a must-adventure

Insight

Expert opinions on the future of travel

THE BIG INTERVIEW

DR NEJIB BEN-KHEDHER

HEAD OF EMIRATES SKYWARDS

'You need to master the art of earning miles through means other than just flying'

Ollie Wilson chats to the head of the Emirates Skywards frequent flyer programme about the best ways to maximise loyalty benefits

ILLUSTRATIONS **PAUL RYDING**

Q&A

Emirates Skywards has experienced a lot of growth recently. What kind of numbers are you experiencing and what do you think has led to that growth?
We've reached 35 million members, and I'm very proud of that, but I think the most important thing is that we're now seeing growth in engagement. We've been acquiring around 9,000 to 10,000 new members daily. I think there are three factors that contribute to our growth.
1. Dubai's global appeal: its 2024 tourism numbers had 9% year-over-year increase, with nearly 19 million visitors.
2. Emirates' premium travel experience drives people to join the loyalty programme. Some people say that I have the easiest job whereby I just leverage Emirates' great brand to enrol people into the programme.
3. Skywards' partnership ecosystem, which makes the programme attractive.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Nejib Ben-Khedher has more than 30 years global experience in the airline and travel industry. He joined Emirates in 2012 as Senior Vice President, Business Technology Solutions, the business facing unit within the Emirates Group IT Division. In 2015, he was appointed Divisional Senior Vice President of Emirates Skywards, the airline's award-winning loyalty programme.

Since Emirates is not part of a global alliance, can you tell us more about your partnerships?
We're a global airline and 93% of our membership is outside our home base. We rely a lot on partnerships that we've created with airlines – but also in the lifestyle category. We've moved away from being just a transactional frequent flyer programme into more of a lifestyle programme.

We've just signed with Garuda Indonesia (our eighth carrier in Asia) so now we have relationships in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, plus strategic partnerships with Qantas. In North America, we have Air Canada and United – the US is our second largest base. The UK is our largest member base, and our relationship with easyJet from a redemption perspective helps bring relevance to our membership here.

Co-branded credit cards are a big space in this industry. Are there any updates on UK co-branded credit cards?
Obviously having a co-branded credit card helps

→

Continued from overleaf

people accumulate miles so they can have access to rewards faster – especially flight rewards, which continue to be extremely attractive for our members.

We have financial partners in the UK – Deluxe, Amex, HSBC, NatWest, RBS – whereby you can convert the reward points from these financial partner programmes into Skywards miles. And that's also getting you closer to flight rewards.

We are working hard on the UK. Our largest base deserves to have its own co-brand. Hopefully in the next few months, you'll see some announcements.

You're also involved in Dubai Duty Free. Tell us about this.
When you buy something in Dubai Duty Free, you can use Skywards miles as a currency – or cash plus miles. Up to 91% of the redemptions come from international travellers passing through Dubai. Among these, UK travellers are pretty prominent. On average, people use up to 20,000 miles to convert into about US$100 to offset some of their buying.

Your online shopping portal Skywards Miles Mall has also grown. Do you have further plans to expand that?
It's already in five of our largest member bases. We have 1,900 retailers in the UK and around three million miles in the UK were earned just last year on this platform.

We also have our Skywards Exclusives platform where you can buy VIP-type experiences such as tickets to the NBA, the US Open and Wimbledon – plus we're adding a lot of cultural events. We're in the final negotiations with one of the biggest arenas in Dubai to have VIP access to all its events throughout the year, too.

With sporting events, people come from all over the world. We had a great example with Arsenal in the UK – fans were craving the experience to watch them beat Manchester City.

Two experiences that drove the biggest engagement, with people bidding up to 500,000 miles, included a three-day retreat in Sri Lanka with Dilmah Tea (which we serve onboard), and a wine tasting with Moët Hennessy in a French château. We create these experiences by leveraging the sponsorships of our partnerships. That strengthens the emotional connection we've created with our members.

Emirates
MOËT
MOËT & CHANDON IMPÉRIAL BRUT
LAKERS
DUTY FREE
Emirates Skywards
CARDMEMBER NAME
mastercard

‘Cash plus miles allows you to have access to any flight, any cabin, any day – there are no blackouts’

You mentioned the rising popularity of cash plus miles. How will this evolve?
Cash plus miles allows you

IMAGES **COURTESY OF EMIRATES**

to have access to any flight, any cabin, any day – there are no blackouts. It's very popular in the UK – 46% of all transactions are cash plus miles transactions. On average, members redeemed 10,000 miles to offset about 15% of the base fare.

We've enhanced the base conversion – it's a 30% increase compared to last year – which is especially useful for infrequent flyers who don't have the miles to get an upgrade or classic rewards. Cash plus miles is one of the best redemption opportunities for them.

We also provide cash plus miles when you shop online, and it's available on ancillaries – if you're buying a seat or increasing your baggage allowance.

How come business class mileage requirements have changed?
We look at this very seriously and don't make these decisions hastily. We've only made one change in probably a decade in the programme, around a year ago, when we increased the business class and first class mileage. We need to somewhat adjust them to be on par with what's out there from a commercial perspective. We handle about 1,000 classic rewards per day and about 40,000 upgrades a month, so the growth continues despite the change.

The paid subscription platform Skywards+ launched in 2021. How have you found its performance?
It surprised us all! More than 60% of the people taking the subscription are Gold members. It's not just a substitute to access status or benefits, it enhances what you already have as a Gold or Platinum member. People have found it extremely valuable, and we're seeing those subscriptions grow year-on-year.

Around 70% of the subscriptions are for the Premium package. One of the reasons is that it helps members to fast-track and retain status quicker, since you get a tier mile bonus once you subscribe – it's one of the incentives along with lounge access, and discounts on upgrades and rewards.

What are your tips for earning rewards or getting upgrades?
You need to master the art of earning miles and increasing them through different means other than just flying. With Skywards, we have a programme with Dubai Mall where you can scan your receipts and earn miles on any purchase. People think of it as catering mostly to the residents, but it also caters the visitors – 25% of people earning at Dubai Mall are visitors, and this adds up quickly with luxury items.

We also have our Skywards Everyday app with more than 400 retailers in Dubai, which links to your credit card so you earn miles whenever you're swiping your card.

People can also book a stay via Emirates Skywards Hotels. On average, people earn 4,000 miles on a three-day stay – that's a London-Mumbai flight. We have 400,000 properties so the choice is massive.

What cabin do you see the most upgrades from?
Just by virtue of the available seats, economy to business. But business to first continues to be the most aspirational, especially for business travellers. They see this as a big value, especially on London or New York JFK flights – those are extremely popular.

Aside from Emirates, which other airlines have impressed you recently?
The diplomatic answer is to say our partners – we have 18 now, so it's difficult to choose one. Every carrier has something to offer. Before Dubai, I lived in Paris and Dallas, so I've flown carriers around the world.

Asian carriers bring in that level of hospitality and you can see them ranking pretty high. European carriers have a level of professionalism and reliability. I started my career with American Airlines, and US carriers bring a level of efficiency and convenience as well.

The Middle Eastern carriers are synonymous with luxury and innovating the travel experience above and beyond. Recently, I flew with flydubai to Riyadh – the staff were extremely friendly, and I had a really pleasant flight. I'm blessed to be part of Emirates, where we have it all: efficiency, luxury, service and hospitality.

What excites you most about Emirates Skywards in the next five years?
I'll maybe surprise you by saying that it's going 'back to basics' as a loyalty programme. We need to win the hearts and minds of our members and ensure we're there in good times but also in tough times when they need us the most.

We need to continue to be true to ourselves as a loyalty programme, but also embrace technology – using AI to engage with customers responsibly and use their data to personalise and make experiences as relevant as possible. We're also aiming to engage with that digitally native generation.

TIER HIGHLIGHTS

EMIRATES SKYWARDS TIER BENEFITS

blue
silver
gold
platinum

BLUE

This entry-level tier is available to all members.

Instant upgrades using Skywards Miles at check-in or onboard

Waitlist priority

Access to free unlimited messaging when travelling

SILVER

You need to earn 25,000 tier miles or take 25 flights.

All Blue tier benefits

30% bonus miles on Emirates and flydubai flights

Complimentary Emirates business class lounge access in Dubai

GOLD

You need to earn 50,000 tier miles or take 50 flights.

All Blue and Silver tier benefits

75% bonus Skywards Miles on Emirates and flydubai flights

Complimentary economy class seat selection for you and passengers in your booking

PLATINUM

You need to earn at least 150,000 tier miles and take one qualifying flight in first or business class.

All Blue, Silver and Gold benefits

Complimentary check-in from a Dubai home or first class check-in at the airport, plus priority baggage delivery

Complimentary lounge access for you and your guests in Emirates' first and business class lounges worldwide

100% bonus Skywards Miles on Emirates and flydubai flights

WORDS
JAKE JONES

IS THIS AVIATION'S BEST PERK?

Fly free between two cities with this innovative offer

ONE OF MY favourite benefits in the points and miles world is United's Excursionist Perk, which allows travellers to add a free one-way ticket on certain round-trip itineraries booked with United miles. The airline has 17 designated regions around the world that group together various countries that fall within similar geographic areas. In the context of the Excursionist Perk, if you book a round-trip ticket with your miles that starts and ends in the same region, you can tack on an extra one-way flight to your itinerary within a different region for free.

A simple example of taking advantage of United's flight perks is booking a round-trip flight between the US and Europe, which are considered two different regions. For instance, I can create a flight itinerary that involves travelling from Chicago to London, then from London to Munich, and finally back to Chicago. In this case, the flight segment from London to Munich would be free because I am starting and ending in the same region (US and Canada), while my free segment occurs within a different region (Europe).

To access this benefit, all you need to do is perform a multi-city search on United's website, listing your three flight segments in chronological order. The second flight segment will then automatically appear at a cost of zero miles.

> 'This unique perk still remains relatively under the radar within the industry'

Monday, May 22
2:27
UNITED
UA 2735
NHCN22
ON TIME
Boarding in 37 min, 36 sec
ORD 3:55 pm
5:24 pm DEN
Gate C23, Terminal 1, Concourse C
Inbound plane arrived

IN REAL TIME The United Airlines mobile app for iOS offers live notifications throughout the entire travel journey

The great thing about this perk is that its parameters are quite flexible, which means creative minds can put together some clever itineraries. There are only four rules that need to be followed to trigger this benefit:

- **Your trip starts and ends in the same region**
- **Your free flight segment must occur within a different region than your origin region**
- **Your free flight segment must also start and end in the same region**
- **Your free flight segment must be in the same or lower cabin class than your other segments in the itinerary**

In our previous example, I could travel from Chicago to London, then from London to Munich, and finally from Munich to New York. This itinerary would still qualify for the free European flight segment because both Chicago and New York are within the same United-defined region.

It's important to note that the round-trip itinerary does not need to start and end in the same city, but rather within the same region.

Of course, you don't have to start and end in the US, nor do any flight segments have to be flown on United. You can fly from Frankfurt to Bangkok with Star Alliance partner Thai Airways, then Bangkok to Singapore and Singapore to London with Singapore Airlines, and the second leg will still cost you zero miles.

If you have an itinerary with more than three legs, you can still trigger the perk, but it would only apply for the leg that starts and ends in a different region than the origin. For example, in the itinerary of London to Frankfurt, Frankfurt to Cape Town, Cape Town to Johannesburg, and Johannesburg to Munich, the third leg would be free.

If you want to get really adventurous with your travel plans, consider incorporating some open-jaw segments into your itineraries. For instance, you could fly from LA to Tokyo, then from Hong Kong to Singapore, and finally from Singapore to San Francisco. This would allow you to enjoy the perk of a free flight from Hong Kong to Singapore. However, you would need to arrange your own travel from Tokyo to Hong Kong outside of this booked itinerary. Just keep in mind that the free flight must occur in a different region from the start point to meet the requirements.

If you ever find yourself with a stash of United miles, consider utilising them to take advantage of this unique perk, which still remains relatively under the radar within the aviation industry.

Savvy customers who plan on seeing multiple cities in one trip can use it to unlock incredible value by saving hundreds of dollars (not to mention thousands of miles) in flight costs. Plus, who doesn't like finding yet another excuse to visit a new destination? BT

IMAGES **UNITED AIRLINES**

HANNAH BRANDLER
DEPUTY EDITOR

OPINION

HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS

Why do we cry more at altitude?

I STEAL A glance to my left. An 18-inch IFE monitor shows familiar animated characters – a cowboy, space ranger and Bo Peep. While Pixar's *Toy Story* plays silently, the images are accompanied by a series of sniffles and the occasional cough to disguise a whimper.

Moments later, a middle-aged businessman emerges from the seat, the lapel of his tailored suit dampened, his head bowed and eyes bloodshot as he scurries to the lavatory to compose himself.

In any other circumstance, it might be unusual for a fully grown man to be weeping at a children's animation – but something strange happens to us at 35,000 feet. Over the years, I've inexplicably shed tears at trashy rom-coms that, on land, have left me dry-eyed. We've all been there. But what prompts such onboard weepiness?

Emotional environment

At its core, we're describing a group of strangers locked in an aluminium tube hurtling through the sky. It makes perfect sense that such an alien environment might trigger our vulnerable side. The inherent stresses of travelling also take a toll on our emotional stability, from the frustration of delays to the irritation of noisy neighbours – not to mention a sense of being cut off from the outside world.

Physiologically, lower oxygen levels can also contribute to mild hypoxia, which affects our mental and emotional state.

Then there's the purpose of the trip itself. Fly-and-flop travellers are likely to be in a cheerier mood than those returning from a work trip where they lost an all-important pitch. The tragic combination of jet lag and burnout, too, are favourable foundations for a weepy journey.

Blubbering in business

Today's cocoon-like suites in business class also provide the privacy to let your emotions run loose – particularly if there's a sliding door to contain your floods of tears. Who knew the real privilege of flying business class was a therapeutic one?

Passengers retreat into a cinematic shell of sorts, captivated by the screen stretching the span of the seat back, while noise-cancelling headphones drown out the engine noise (or fellow teary passengers). Some of us intentionally channel our emotions by opting for tearjerkers such as *Marley & Me* and *The Notebook*, while others find themselves getting emotional at the slightest bit of sentimentality in an action film.

> **'The free-flowing drinks trolley helps to crank emotions up a notch'**

FLIGHTY FEELINGS
Altitude, cabin pressure and travel stresses can make tears more likely when up in the air

The free-flowing drinks trolley only helps to crank emotions up a notch. One drink in, and you're still able to blink back tears. Three drinks pass your lips, however, and your wine glass becomes a vessel for tipsy tears. You can't even excuse your watery eyes on spicy inflight meals, since low humidity and decreased air pressure numb taste buds at altitude.

In economy class, travellers might find themselves even closer to tears thanks to the onslaught of inconsiderate space-invading neighbours, or worse, passengers filing their nails beside you (yes, this has happened). The only consolation is that a fellow passenger might volunteer a shoulder to cry on.

I recall a particularly low moment during the pandemic, watching *BBC* drama *Time* while sandwiched in the middle seat of an economy cabin. My face mask became a pouch for a puddle of tears, but instead of sympathy, neighbouring passengers leaned away from me fearing my watery eyes were a sign of Covid-19.

While societal pressures might frown upon such outward displays, I'm a strong proponent of treating your journey as an emotional outlet. We should embrace the cathartic release provided by a flight and enjoy feeling that bit lighter when we land. Perhaps we'll even see airlines sell it as a form of th-air-apy.

If your tears have not yet smudged the ink on this page – then enjoy the emotional ride!

ILLUSTRATION **BEN SOUTHAN** IMAGE **ADOBE STOCK**

ALL ABOARD Eurostar stationed at London St Pancras International

eurostar
4008

BACK *ON TRACK*

Swapping planes for trains, Eurostar is accelerating business travel in Switzerland

WITH TRAVEL RESPONSIBLE FOR UP to 80% of an event's carbon footprint, companies are watching their step when it comes to hosting. Many are turning to climate-conscious countries, like Switzerland, to reduce their overall impact. In April, the Go Sustainable UK team, made up of Evolve Events, Eurostar, and Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau UK & Ireland (SCIB) embarked on a trip to try out Switzerland's eco-friendly offerings, and it did not disappoint.

A NATURAL CHOICE

Switzerland's dedication to sustainability, seamless transport options, and incredible culture hotspots are just a few of the hallmarks that make it such a smart business destination. Tapping up a hivemind of key partners and providers, including Eurostar and Swiss Tourism, the Go Sustainable UK team planned the ultimate sustainable business trip, starting with a flight-free arrival. Compared to traditional air travel which can accumulate up to 195kg carbon emissions per passenger, their train trip from London to Zurich resulted in only 11kg emissions each, showing just how accessible and sustainable business travel can truly be. Inge Bauwens (pictured right), Senior Lead, Eurostar for Business & MICE, explains:

"Eurostar's offering for business travel goes beyond just transportation. [...] It's about making the journey part of the event. With our expanded network now reaching beyond hub cities, Eurostar offers an even more sustainable way for businesses to travel across Europe."

SUSTAINABLE STAYS

Upon arrival, the group stayed at the eco-conscious Hotel Waldstätterhof. This hotel is located in the heart of Lucerne, offering flood-lit rooms, versatile meeting spaces, and high-tech amenities.

The group then made a professional pit-stop to the Swiss business hub, Zurich. Located in a former industrial district, The 25hours Hotel offers a whole host of business facilities such as an advanced meeting room and an all-encompassing business. In keeping with the country's sustainability pledges, this Green Key-certified hotel avoids single-use plastic, opting instead for reusable tableware and compostable straws.

> **‘Switzerland’s commitment to sustainability is deeply embedded in our culture, from our transport infrastructure to our event venues. This trip showcased how effortlessly sustainability can be integrated into business events, offering planners a practical and enjoyable way to meet ESG targets.’**
>
> **Reto Konrad,**
> SCIB UK & Ireland

EXTRA-CURRICULARS

A range of exciting, environmentally friendly initiatives are available across the region, perfect for bookending your business trip with a dose of leisure. The team dropped by FREITAG’s flagship store, where truck tarps are upcycled into stylish bags, to witness Zurich’s circular economy in action. They also tried out a ‘Taste the Waste’ workshop – another essential to tag onto your trip. This unique cooking course teaches you how to avoid food waste through creatively using leftovers, ticking both the boxes of sustainability and after-work-hours fun. The next day, a low-emission cruise aboard the MS Cirrus on Lake Lucerne and a cogwheel train ride to Mount Rigi brought this trip to its sustainable end.

This journey earned a Distinction for its ESG credentials, setting a new standard for work events everywhere. So, whether you’re headed for a quarterly conference or an annual incentives trip, Switzerland has all the makings of an incredible business destination.

Elevate your work trips with Swiss sustainability
Switzerland.com/meetings

ALL WORK AND ALL PLAY
A swimming pool repurposed as an events venue (right); the creative ‘Taste the Waste’ workshop (below)

MAKING MOVES
The Go Sustainable UK team (L-R): Anna Peters (Evolve Events), Inge Bauwens (Eurostar), Reto Konrad (SCIB) (left); exploring Switzerland (below)

Fast and flexible

Eurostar now offers two great new services for business users

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With this free, easy-to-use platform, users can enjoy exclusive offers, earn personal points, and access discounts for your business. Plus, you can simply track, report, and manage on your company’s travel spend.
eurostar.com/uk-en/eurostar-for-business

Eurostar for Conferences

You can now offer delegates 10-15% off travel to your conference held at any Eurostar destination. Simply request access and a team member will guide you through the process.
conference.eurostar.com

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NEED FOR SPEED

Jeremy Taylor catches up with triple-F1 motor racing champion Sir Jackie Stewart

ACTION MAN: The racing legend at Goodwood Revival in 2019

How did you become a racing driver?
I grew up in Dumbarton, Scotland, where Dad owned a garage business. My brother, Jimmy, drove for the Ecurie Ecosse team and competed at the British Grand Prix in 1953. It was hugely exciting to be in the pit lane. One of my father's customers asked if I would like a trial in a racing car myself. I did well enough to be asked back.

Were you competitive as a youngster?
I wasn't looked after very well at school – they often treated me like an idiot and I left when I was 15 to work in the family business. I found out many years later that I suffered from dyslexia. In those days, nobody seemed to know about it, so there was no help or advice for children.

Was there a defining moment in your career?
Yes, but it had nothing to do with motor racing! My father was the son of a gamekeeper, so as a teenager I tried shooting. I won the first competition I entered because it was held on New Year's Day and everyone else had a hangover. I could have competed for Great Britain at the 1960 Olympic Games but missed one target during qualifying. Shooting gave me the confidence that I didn't have at school.

Who helped you along the way?
Helen, my wife of 63 years. We met on a blind date at a café in Helensburgh. During the early years of racing, before we had our two sons Paul and Mark, she was always in the pit lane, operating the stopwatch as my timekeeper. In 2014, Helen was diagnosed with dementia and is now unable to walk. I've built a specially equipped apartment next to our home, on the shores of Lake Geneva, where she has round-the-clock care.

What was it like being a world champion?
I was known as the Flying Scot and my first Formula 1 championship was in 1969. I won it again in 1971 and 1973, but that first year was huge. I travelled the world and met so many interesting people. George Harrison taught my son to play guitar, Princess Grace of Monaco was a great friend – we had an amazing time. I raced for Tyrrell and despite our success, we still ran the team from a wooden shed in Surrey.

Why did you become an advocate for track safety?
Formula 1 is my life, but the era I raced was incredibly dangerous – every weekend we risked our necks. One year, we lost a driver every month. Safety measures at some tracks were non-existent: no crash barriers, no doctors, no ambulances. When I crashed at the Belgian Grand Prix in 1966, I ended up in a farm building, trapped in my car and covered in fuel. Racing driver Graham Hill then came off at the same spot. He had to help lift me out and put me in the back of a hay truck.

THE FLYING SCOT: Sir Jackie earlier this year

> ‘Formula 1 is my life, but the era I raced was incredibly dangerous – every weekend we risked our necks’

Helen and I still have a farm in Buckinghamshire. I've built wooden benches around the grounds, each one in memory of a friend I've lost. There are 57. I would have been a more popular world champion if I hadn't campaigned for track safety but it needed to be done.

Who is your greatest hero of all time?
Fangio was my absolute hero and I was lucky enough to meet him. He won five championships and was an incredible driver. Jim Clark was a fellow Scot, a lovely, quiet man and a great friend. When he died racing at Hockenheim in 1968, I was devastated. I'd been to a lot of funerals by then and held it together, but I cried the day they buried Jim.

What is your forecast for the 2025 F1 season?
I'm 85 now and don't drive much. I still love watching Formula 1 though, and 2025 will be a fascinating season. After such a long period of dominance, Red Bull might lose out to McLaren. Lewis Hamilton is 40 now, but he's still supremely fit and I think he has a great chance at Ferrari too.

Why are you attending Goodwood Festival of Speed this summer?
This year marks the 60th anniversary of a joint track record I set at the Goodwood Motor Circuit with Jim Clark. It was Easter Monday 1965 and the Glover Trophy – Goodwood's last-ever F1 race. Jim's career will also be celebrated at the Goodwood Revival festival, taking place in September.

How do you spend your retirement?
I established the charity Race Against Dementia in 2016. It's a terribly bad illness with no known cure, so I've invested millions of pounds into research. I'm very lucky to be able to afford specialist care for Helen but I know other families are not so fortunate. It's heart-breaking what they have to go through. We also have nine grandchildren and I love walking our two Norfolk terriers, Jack and Jill.

Did you enjoy flying on Concorde?
I flew back and forth to America regularly in the 70s, when I was a sports commentator on ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. I travelled on Concorde about 40 times. I can't say I enjoyed the experience of flying so much, although it was a privilege to be sat in row 1.

What's your inflight entertainment pick?
I prefer to read, relax or talk – there's often somebody interesting. About 40 years ago, I happened to sit next to a cancer specialist on Concorde, just after I'd been to a funeral for a friend who had died of the disease. Since then, we fly to Minnesota annually for a health check.

What's your dream destination?
I don't think Helen and I ever had a proper holiday! We would fly out to Aqaba to spend time with King Hussein of Jordan – that was always a treat because he was such a great man. When I was racing, you naturally ended up spending time with other drivers, like Jochen Rindt, or Piers Courage. We'd also go away to Jim Clark's place in the Bahamas – that's a dream destination. **BT**

For information on the Festival of Speed and Goodwood Revival, visit goodwood.com; details of Sir Jackie's charity can be found at raceagainstdementia.com

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EXTRA DAY

Muscat

Explore incense-infused souks, ancient forts and mesmerising architecture in Oman's capital

WORDS **ALLY WYBREW**

SPRAWLING LANGUIDLY ALONG the Gulf of Oman, modest-sized Muscat has found an equilibrium between historic tradition and fast-paced modernity. Unlike several Arab cities, construction restrictions forbid skyscrapers and promote classical Omani design. The capital is a city proud of both its heritage and its wealth – let's discover some of the highlights.

IMAGE **ADOBE STOCK**

Continued from previous page

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

Capable of accommodating 20,000 worshippers at once, this opulent piece of architecture blends regional elements with international influences. Walls, windows and doorways echo Andalusian and Moroccan stylings, while materials hail from all over – the carpet in the men's prayer room is the second largest in the world, hand-stitched by 600 Iranian women, while its towering marble columns originate from Italy and its dense doors are constructed from Myanmar teak. The defining piece is an 8.5-tonne, 600,000 Swarovski crystal chandelier. Tourist hours are 8.30-11am daily (except Friday), and tour guides are mandatory.

Mutrah

Hugging the harbour to the west of Old Muscat is Mutrah, historically the city's centre of commerce. Stop outside the fish market, then duck inside to the sights and scents of fishers hawking their wares. Watch as cleaver-wielding workers expertly slice and dice customers' purchases. The adjacent vegetable market sells locally grown onions, melons and tomatoes alongside Khalas Saudi dates – a local favourite. Then stroll along the picturesque corniche to the incense-infused Mutrah Souk. The alleyways of this 200-year-old market are packed with everything from gold and silver jewellery to kumas and abayas. It's a great spot to barter for Hojari frankincense, one of the finest varieties of Oman's prized export. Visit between 4.30pm and 10pm for the liveliest experience.

> 'Its souk is a great place to sample dates, cardamom-infused coffee and tahini'

Al Mirani Fort

Forts are big business in Oman (there are at least 500) and many provide a fascinating insight into the 143-year Portuguese occupation of Muscat (1507-1650). To the east of Mutrah, two 16th-century strongholds cling to craggy outcroppings. On the eastern protrusion, Al Jalali Fort is kept for the sultan's exclusive use but Al Mirani Fort on the west is open to the public. A weapons room houses ancient muskets, canons and swords, while staggered battlements offer elevated views of Old Muscat and Al Alam Palace. Built in 1972 by Indian architects Shapoorji Pallonji, the palace blends traditional Omani design elements (symmetrical layout, archways and geometric patterns) with contemporary bright blue and gold-embossed columns.

ABOVE: Souvenirs on sale in the market in Nizwa
LEFT: Night view of Al Mirani Fort

Nizwa

Don't miss Nizwa, 160 km south of Muscat. Its souk (one of Oman's oldest) is a great place to sample sweet dates, cardamom-infused coffee and tahini. On Friday mornings, the cattle market rolls into town, often sporting long-haired Jebel Akhdar goats. Nizwa Castle and Fort is also worth a look; the renovated, 17th-century stronghold reveals curious defence secrets, such as slits above the stairwell where hot honey was once poured onto attackers. While there, taste *ragag*, a traditional breakfast. In the courtyard, women heat thick dough on a flat, circular pan to create crêpe-like bread, then slather it with egg, date syrup, oil, honey or cheese.

WADI GHUL AND WADI SHAB

If an extra day means escaping the city, there are fantastic options just a few hours away from Muscat. Don your walking boots and tackle the 3.5km (one way) 'Balcony Walk' of Wadi Ghul, the Middle East's deepest canyon. This scenic trek follows a ledge-like trail halfway up a cliffside dotted with mountain goats and breathtaking views, before ending in the ruins of the old As Shab village.

Alternatively, make a beeline for Wadi Shab (left). This lush rocky canyon is filled with palm trees, turquoise water pools and funky geological formations. Take a refreshing dip or tackle the gently ascending gorge-edge path to enjoy cinematic views. Visitors can number in the hundreds, so head here early. Stop at Bimmah Sinkhole on your return for another quick dip and photo op.

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK

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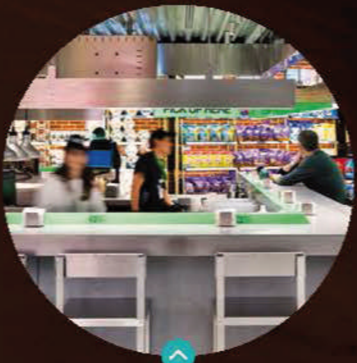
Three of Europe's best airport restaurants

Travellers don't usually associate airport terminals with fine dining, but these three spots show just how good food can be before you hit the runway.

MOUNTAIN HUB GOURMET, MUNICH
Munich is the world's only airport with a Michelin-starred restaurant, located at the Hilton hotel between Terminals 1 and 2. Mountain Hub Gourmet's four or six-course tasting menus celebrate local Bavarian produce wherever possible, while business lunches include the likes of venison with pumpkin and radicchio or decadent egg yolk ravioli with Parmesan.



HUNGRY CLUB, MADRID–BARAJAS
Dabiz Muñoz is an award-winning chef with Michelin stars across his restaurants, so Hungry Club promises much more refinement than its name might suggest. Globally inspired dishes include laksa and ramen, pizza with kimchi or his famed signature Pedroche cheesecake. There are five Hungry Club outlets across Spain, with three more to come.

> 'Chef Cyril Lignac has teamed up with Louis Vuitton for an intimate café housed in a futuristic pavilion'

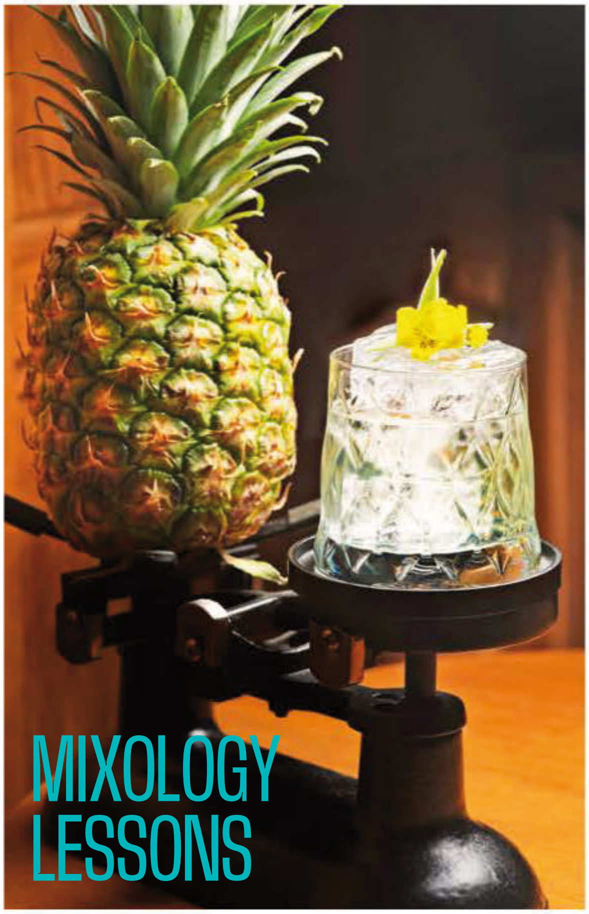
LE CAFÉ CYRIL LIGNAC AT LOUIS VUITTON, LONDON HEATHROW
Parisian chef Cyril Lignac has teamed up with the legendary fashion brand's store at Heathrow Terminal 2 for an intimate café housed in a sleek and futuristic pavilion. Indulge in a classic croque-monsieur or lobster roll, before treating yourself to an Eton Mess or a lavish Louis Vuitton-branded pastry.

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

MIXOLOGY LESSONS

THE PRIVATE CLUBS of 19th-century London had something of a reputation as all-male bastions of privilege, but one reincarnation has seen them become far more inclusive – and spread far beyond the British capital. The award-winning cocktail bar Punch Room can be found in EDITION hotels in London, Barcelona, Madrid, Shanghai, Tokyo, Singapore, Rome and Tampa.

Interiors feature dark leather club chairs, funked-up soundtracks and stellar cocktail lists with libations including a Milk Punch crafted from ingredients such as Hennessy Cognac, Planteray 3 Stars rum and Cider Brandy. All the extra details are revealed in the Punch Room's new menu 'The Recipe Book', which chronicles how to make your own versions of its classics and new creations from the bar manager, Anthony Callegari. There are also fool-proof step-by-step guides for those challenged in the culinary arts.



LEFT The Milk Punch at the London EDITION outpost

GOURMET GALLERY

GIORGIO LOCATELLI WAS a celebrity chef long before they became ubiquitous – and regular diners despaired at the closure of his restaurant Locanda Locatelli in Marylebone at the start of the year – after 23 years in business. Happily, however, alongside his wife Plaxy and partners Searcys, he is opening a new Locatelli restaurant and separate espresso bar on 10 May in the newly renovated Sainsbury Wing of The National Gallery in London. The 80-seater restaurant on the mezzanine level promises more of the unfussy but beautifully executed regional Italian cooking that has defined him – from primi such as braised veal ravioli with parsley gremolata and Parmigiano Reggiano sauce, to classics like roast chicken alla cacciatora and polenta. The wine and drinks menu is entirely Italian, while the ground floor's Bar Giorgio promises some of central London's most authentic Italian coffee, sandwiches and both sweet and savoury Roman brioche-style buns.

CHEERS AT ALTITUDE

ANNIVERSARIES ARE ALWAYS the perfect excuse to raise a glass. Two airlines celebrating significant milestones this year are serving up special pours onboard. Air New Zealand is marking its 85th birthday by launching wine label, **Thirteen Forty Five**, paying homage to the distance covered on its inaugural flight from Auckland to Sydney in 1940.

The carrier has worked with wine producer Villa Maria to craft the new offering, which will be served in domestic Air NZ lounges and also in premium economy cabins on international routes. Vineyards in Marlborough's Awatere valley provided the Sauvignon Blanc grapes, promising passion fruit and lemongrass on the nose, while the Pinot Noir from the Wairau Valley has notes of cherry and plum.

This year also marks Delta's centennial. The airline's partnership with family-owned Champagne house **Maison Taittinger** will see it serve Taittinger Brut la Francaise Champagne from the bar cart in Delta One and as a pre-meal tipple. Expect peach and vanilla aromas from the pale gold pour, before a touch of honey on the palate.

TAITTINGER

IMAGES COURTESY OF AVOLTA; COURTESY OF EDITION HOTELS; THE NATIONAL GALLERY LONDON

All aboard for good health

A spa on wheels awaits in the UK countryside

DON'T WAIT UNTIL you arrive at your destination to start relaxing. The holiday starts even sooner if you travel on Belmond's luxury sleeper train, Britannic Explorer, which will feature the very first spa on the rails in England and Wales when it takes to the tracks this July.

The Wellness Suite has been conceived in partnership with British skincare brand Wildsmith, with travellers able to pre-book treatments on the train's three and six-night itineraries to Wales, the Lake District and Cornwall. Customers can choose from five bespoke treatments, all inspired by the natural world rushing past beyond the window.

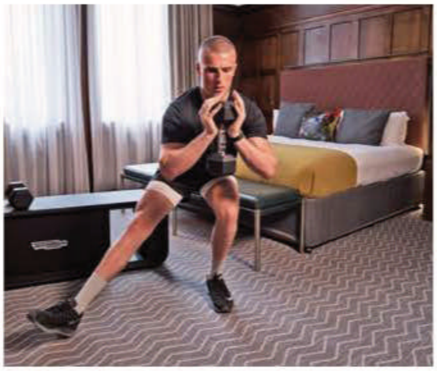
The pampering doesn't end in the treatment room either. All journeys include gourmet meals, fine wines and accommodation in luxury private sleeper cabins. Packages also encompass wellness experiences off the rails, such as open water swimming, guided coastal hikes, sailing and yoga to top up that feel-good glow.

ROUTE TO RELAXATION Choose from five treatments inspired by nature

DIAL ZERO FOR SELF-CARE

IF YOU STRUGGLE to maintain a healthy lifestyle while travelling, Kimpton has the answer. The upmarket hotel chain has launched a wellness concierge service to help guests keep up good habits – even when they're not at home.

Available at Kimpton's hotels in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, the service includes bespoke fitness plans, complimentary bikes to borrow and in-room Technogym equipment including dumbbells, yoga mats and resistance bands. Guests will also gain free access to the Swell Sound Therapy app to help them drift off at night, and can even have a plant delivered to their room – which is shown to reduce stress and improve mental health.



Worried you won't be able to resist the room service menu? Feel free to dial with abandon. Kimpton has introduced a special wellness menu featuring all you need for self-care on the move, including Ishga bath salts and warming eye masks. There's even a range of trendy gadgets to borrow for no extra charge, including LED face masks, foam rollers, blue light glasses and Theragun massage guns to ease stiffness and boost circulation.

WORDS
SIOBHAN GROGAN

HEALTHY MEALS WITHOUT THE HASSLE

We could all do with a helping hand to eat healthier. Calo is a new personalised meal delivery service that brings chef-crafted food to your doorstep, helping you to achieve weight loss, muscle gain or just a more balanced diet. The service is rolling out nationwide this month and offers 35 daily choices that can be customised through the app to change portion sizes, swap ingredients or track nutrition.

Step back in time

THE LATEST TREND in the wellness world is anything but new. Spas and tour operators have realised that tried and tested ancient treatments can help us wind down and feel more peaceful. Himalayan tour operator Shakti Himalaya has launched all-inclusive 'Soul Soother' wellness breaks, running until September in India's Ladakh region, 3,500 metres above sea level. These include time with a traditional healer, monastery visits to learn Buddhist meditation, daily hikes and yoga, and healthy Indian meals cooked by a private chef.

New itineraries from adventure travel company Explore are also focusing on time-honoured health practices. The 12-day Discover South Korea Tour, for instance, includes the opportunity to meet Korean Buddhist monks and learn martial art Sunmudo.

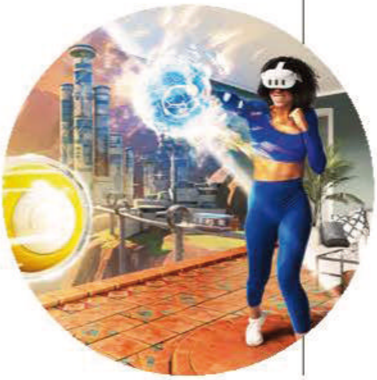
Closer to home, nip over to Hôtel de Crillon in Paris. Inspired by Japanese architectural elements including rice paper and raku ceramics, its spa offers treatments from EviDenS de Beauté, based on Japanese techniques incorporating drainage, acupressure and massage.

TRANQUIL TREKS 'Soul Soother' itineraries include a visit to the foot of Stok Kangri, the highest peak in Ladakh

META MOVEMENT

BORED OF THE gym? Now you can work out in a virtual setting thanks to the VR fitness app FitXR for Meta Quest, which brings exercising firmly into the 21st century. It allows users to feel like they're in a real fitness class, offering over 1,000 classes including boxing, combat, HIIT, Zumba, sculpt and dance – plus new workouts daily to keep things interesting. The app also features daily challenges and rewards to encourage users to get moving every day. Multiplayer functionality will allow you to 'work out' with a friend for extra motivation, while you can also phase out the virtual setting slightly to keep track of your real surroundings.

All this and you won't even need to leave home to work out.



IMAGES **MATTHEW POVER LTD; COURTESY OF BELMOND; COURTESY OF SHAKTI HIMALAYA**

GADGET PICK

THE PRODUCT

Oh, snap!

Fujifilm's latest camera launch is perfect for your carry-on case and picturesque travels

FUJIFILM HAS RELEASED a compact digital camera, ideal for those who pack light on their travels. The GFX100RF (£4,699) is the brand's smallest and lightest of the GFX range, and the first to feature a fixed lens. Available in either a sleek silver or black finish, the new model can shoot video and capture a range of settings – from low-lit street photography to wide-angled travel snaps.

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

THE EXPERIENCE

EXPLORING THE ETERNAL CITY

ROCCO FORTE HOTELS is offering guests at its Hotel de Russie and Hotel de La Ville properties in Rome exclusive experiences of the Eternal City. Guests can join a private walking tour from Piazza Pia to St Peter's Basilica, attend a traditional art class, or tour the city's Papal Basilicas. For those wanting to venture further afield, there's a day trip to Castelli Romani – a collection of hilltop villages south-east of Rome – which includes a tour of the Papal Palace of Castel Gandolfo. Prices start from €1,150 (£960) for two people.

THE TOUR

A SENSE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

AVANI HOTELS & Resorts, a subsidiary of Minor Hotels, has launched its World Heritage Adventure package. Over the course of five days, guests will visit UNESCO-listed Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Luang Prabang in Laos, with activities including a herbal gin tasting and a sunset cruise along the Mekong River. Two nights will be spent at FCC Angkor by Avani, a historic mansion located in the centre of Siem Reap's French Quarter, with the remainder of the trip at Avani + Luang Prabang Hotel. The package starts from £1,563 for two guests in a double room.

THE STAY

Stadium style

Novotel Hotels has teamed up with Paris Saint-Germain to offer immersive rooms across its hotels around the world. Each 'Legendary Room' will profile a former PSG player, featuring framed portraits and football memorabilia. Guests will also have access to exclusive video interviews and match highlights via a QR code on their keycard. The rooms are being gradually unveiled, with the first dedicated to Javier Pastore in Novotel Jakarta Cikini, Indonesia.

IMAGES COURTESY OF ROCCO FORTE; CHRIS HAU; COURTESY OF MINOR HOTELS; ADOBE STOCK

Explore CULTURE

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

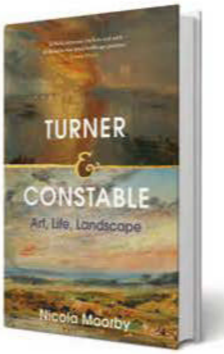
WATCH

Pangolin: Kulu's Journey

Pippa Ehrlich, the Academy Award-winning director of documentary hit *My Octopus Teacher*, has turned her focus to the highly endangered pangolin species for this new Netflix programme. The documentary follows a man who rescues a baby pangolin from being trafficked during a sting operation. With the hope of returning Kulu to the wild, he hand-rears the pangolin and helps it acclimatise to its native environment.

READ

Turner and Constable
by Nicola Moorby



ART HISTORIAN AND curator Nicola Moorby unpacks the distinct, but seemingly intertwined, lives of two of Britain's most influential artists: J.M.W Turner and John Constable. By peeling back the layers of fiction that surround their achievements, she offers a fresh look at their careers throughout the late 1700s and 1800s, and charts the rise of landscape painting for which they are best known.

LISTEN

3
THREE
PEOPLE
WITH REBECCA FRONT

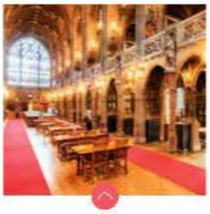
Three People

PEEK INSIDE THE world of TV and film via this podcast by Rebecca Front, the BAFTA-winning actress best known for her role as Nicola in Armando Iannucci's political satire *The Thick of It*. Rebecca sits down with friends and co-stars, including writer Iannucci and co-star Peter Capaldi, and kicks off each episode by discovering the three people that have most impacted their lives. Candid conversations move between the private lives and career milestones of famous guests.

CULTURAL CALENDAR

OUR PICK OF EVENTS TAKING PLACE AROUND THE WORLD

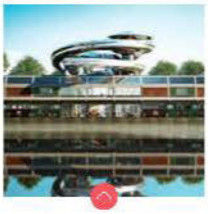
DOMESTIC



Collections Gallery at John Rylands Library, Manchester

John Rylands Library is celebrating its 125th anniversary by opening a new gallery space on 15 May, complete with over 40 artefacts. These include a 14th-century trilingual Qur'an manuscript, Shakespeare's first folio, Alan Turing's notes on the groundbreaking MARK I computer, plus a notebook from Rob Gretton – the manager of rock bands Joy Division and New Order.

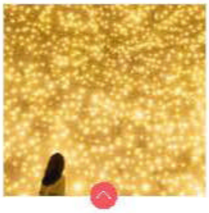
SHORT-HAUL



Fenix, Rotterdam

The city's newest museum will open on 16 May within a restored warehouse in the waterside neighbourhood of Katendrecht. Its debut exhibition *All Directions: Art That Moves You* showcases 150 contemporary and historical pieces by international artists, all relating to the museum's focus on migration. The ground floor will be home to free events featuring food, performances and Dutch-language sessions.

LONG-HAUL



teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi

International art collective teamLab is behind this multisensory experience spanning 17,000 sqm in Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Cultural District. Housed within a purpose-built structure, immersive exhibits interact with both the visitors and the physical environment. These include a display of hanging spheres of light that brighten when touched by spectators.

IMAGES MAD ARCHITECTS; CHARLES FRONT; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF NETFLIX; TEAMLAB PHENOMENA ABU DHABI; RICH J JONES PHOTOGRAPHY; COURTESY OF MARKETING MANCHESTER

SPONSORED CONTENT

TAKING FLIGHT
China Airlines' latest Airbus A350 aircraft (below) is elevating the aviation game with three distinct cabin experiences.

Flying in style

From Taiwan's tech hub to the world, China Airlines is transforming transcontinental travel

FOUNDED IN 1959, the multi-award-winning China Airlines remains Taiwan's largest carrier, with an impressive fleet of 82 aircraft. The latest addition is the Airbus A350. Complete with three curated world-class cabins and an exclusive Sky Lounge, this craft delivers an exceptional travel experience across the globe.

As a member of SkyTeam, China Airlines has a rolodex of destinations, including the only nonstop service from London Heathrow to Taipei. The A350 also offers same-day onward connections to Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Auckland, making China Airlines the largest operator from Taiwan to Australia and New Zealand.

COMFORT IS KEY

From persimmon wood grain finishes to smooth leather recliners, the A350 is designed to elevate your inflight experience. Onboard you'll also find gourmet dining, fast wifi, an exciting entertainment library of films, TV shows, music and e-books, and even an online shopping site. The A350 is equipped with everything you could need for the perfect travel experience.

FLYING HIGH-CLASS

This aircraft offers three cabins: Economy, Premium Economy, and Business – each complete with their own benefits. Among the Business Class benefits is access to the exclusive Sky Lounge. More than a bar, this space combines selections from Taiwan cuisine and culture, offering a unique edge to your inflight experience. The stories behind these products are printed on the packaging, allowing you to explore Taiwan, one snack at a time. The airline also partners with Eslite Bookstore to provide destination-themed books, so tourists can fall further in love with Taiwan.

Experience sky-high comfort
china-airlines.com/UK/EN

BEST IN CLASS

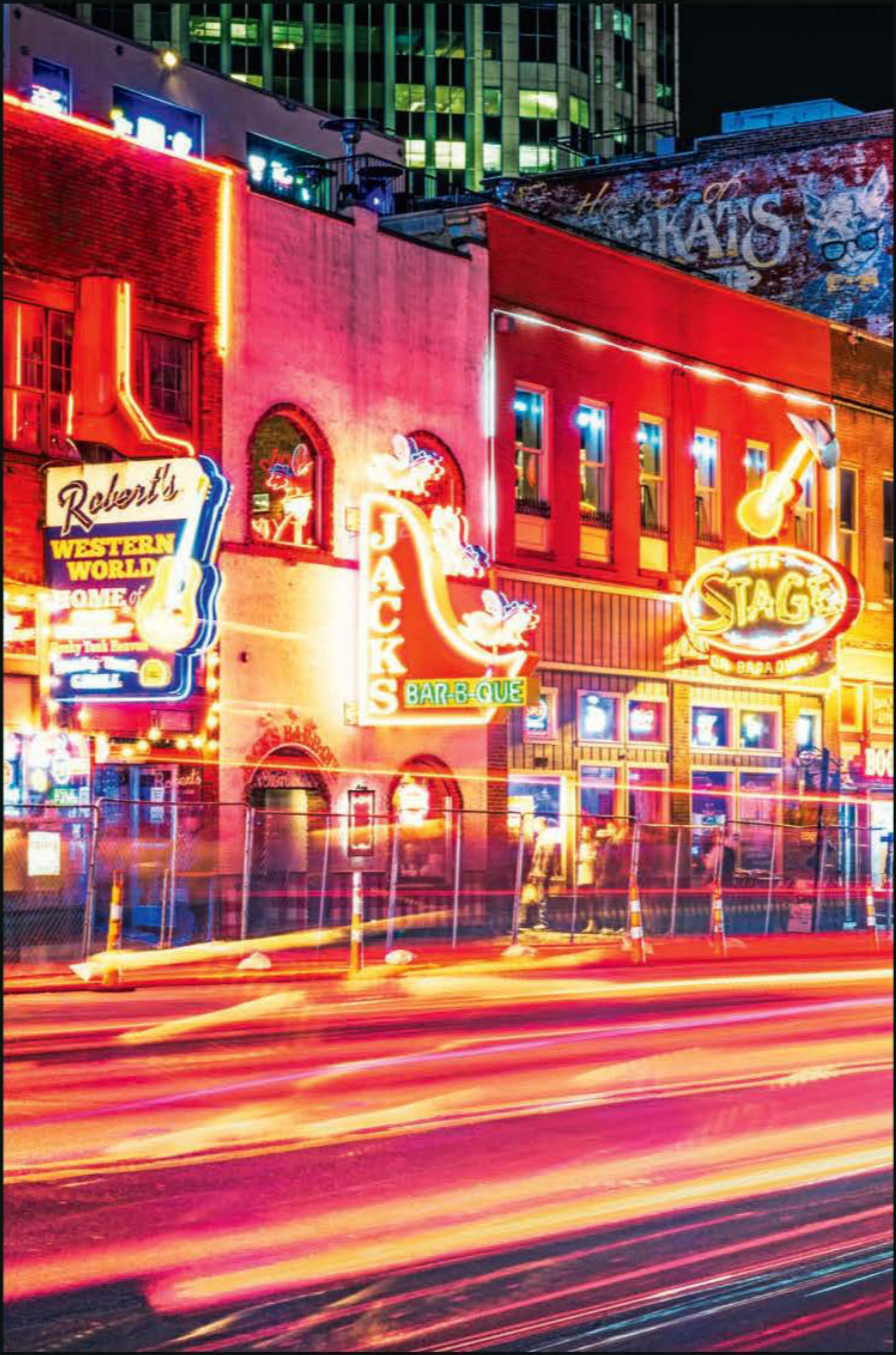
The A350 is divided into three cabins with their own perks:

BUSINESS
Enjoy vast personal storage, your own 18" TV, and guaranteed aisle access.

PREMIUM ECONOMY
Savour personalised meals, a fixed-back chair shell, and priority check-in procedures.

ECONOMY
Unwind with your own TV, an adjustable head rest, outlet, and a private USB socket.

MAKING MEMORIES


Robert's
WESTERN
WORLD
HOME of
JACKS
BAR-B-QUE
THE
STAGE
ON BROADWAY
KATS

As country music enjoys a renaissance, we head to Nashville to discover its roots and celebrate the meteoric rise of the genre

WORDS **HANNAH BRANDLER**

CITY IN MUSIC

“Damn straight!”, shouts a Stetson-clad spectator behind me. Straight ahead, a blue-jeaned man sways to the rhythm – entranced. The rest of the 4,400-strong congregation wave their phone torches in unison to T. Graham Brown’s passionate performance of *Wine into Water* – the lyrics calling on God’s support for his journey to sobriety. We’re at Nashville’s iconic Grand Ole Opry, the Mother Church of Country Music. Celebrating its centenary this year, the Opry is home to the longest-running live radio show in the US, hosting household names such as Willie Nelson, Hank Williams and Dolly Parton, as well as contemporary stars Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood, plus rising songwriters.

Every week, a regularly changing line-up of eight or more artists perform on the famous six-foot hardwood circle – their dulcet tones reaching millions of listeners thanks to WSM Radio’s broadcast. On our visit, the bill was bookended by the youngest and oldest members of the Opry (Lauren Alaina and Bill Anderson) – and the atmosphere was electric.

You’d be forgiven (yet mistaken) for assuming this was the main attraction that night in Nashville. Downtown that same evening, Leon Bridges graced the stage at the more intimate yet no less prestigious Ryman Auditorium (the former home of the Grand Ole Opry), while tourists swigged Bud Lights and dropped dollars into tip jars along the neon-beaming Honky Tonk Highway on Lower Broadway – where live music pours out of bars from 10am to 3am, 365 days a year.

Beyond the bounds of Nashville, country music is also experiencing a major renaissance, infiltrating the mainstream and reaching heights of popularity not seen since the 1990s.

Artists such as Morgan Wallen, Luke Combs and Kacey Musgraves regularly feature in the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the US, while the UK’s Official Charts revealed that the genre had a 67% increase in popularity in 2024, with combined sales and streaming-equivalent sales of country singles surpassing 11.5 million (compared to 6.9 million in 2023). Indeed, for the first time in its history, the Opry is even going international – debuting at London’s Royal Albert Hall this autumn.

MUSIC MECCA

To trace the origins of Nashville’s musical talent, I head downtown to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which charts the history of the musical genre through galleries of memorabilia, instruments, song manuscripts, archival video and interactive touchscreens – plus a Taylor Swift Education Centre, naturally. I couldn’t help but tap my feet and bob my head as I moved through the exhibition spaces, envious of the tasselled trims and bedazzled jackets on display.

The greatest country stars of all time are memorialised in its Hall of Fame – a silent and atmospheric rotunda, where natural light illuminates 155 plaques honouring the likes of Dolly Parton and Elvis Presley.

THE STATS

$10.84 BILLION
in direct visitor spending in 2024

17.5 MILLION
visitors forecast in 2025, 18.1 million in 2027, 20 million by 2033

3RD
most popular meetings destination in North America, according to Cvent

2,352
new hotel rooms and 17 hotels under construction

GRAN
OP
WSM RADIO
GRAND O
OPRY

To get a real sense of where the magic’s made, it’s worth joining the museum’s tour of the RCA Studio B, widely credited as the pioneer of Nashville’s Music Row. Elvis Presley alone recorded more than 240 songs at RCA Studio B, while Dolly Parton’s *I Will Always Love You* was taped here in the 70s. The ‘Home of 1,000 Hits’ is now a popular attraction, complete with an X on the floor marking the spot where music titans such as Roy Orbison and the Everly Brothers engaged their vocal cords. You’ll even spy scratches from musicians’ fingernails on the keys of a 1942 Steinway piano.

CHANGING TUNES

Nashville might be the capital of country music, but its offering extends far beyond this genre. Home to more than 180 live music venues, the city pulses with jazz, bluegrass, gospel, rock, hip-hop, R&B – you name it. Even my strolls around

ND OLE
PRY
OLE OPRY
circle

ABOVE: Taylor Swift's dress and guitar at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. **LEFT:** The Grand Ole Opry auditorium

downtown are serenaded by utility boxes, which play tunes throughout the day while still fulfilling traffic duties.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Nashville is home to more music museums than anywhere in the world. The most recent addition is The National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM), which showcases 50 genres and subgenres of music. Visitors are equipped with an RFID bracelet to save playlists as they glide through the immersive galleries, while headphones dotted throughout complete the sensory experience.

At the heart of the museum is the Rivers of Rhythm corridor, featuring a lengthy touchscreen table that doubles as a timeline of African American history – highlighting how events shaped sounds and culture over 13 eras, with a playlist to match each one. For instance, the 1986-1999 panel ties the Rodney King riots in LA to the emergence of hip-hop.

It's next door at the Roots & Streams display, however, that I really lose track of time. The interactive exhibit reveals musical connections throughout history; as I listen to Ella Fitzgerald's honey-like rendition of *Summertime*, the display highlights Louis Armstrong's inspiration, contemporaries such as Billie Holiday, and the impact on followers from Nina Simone to Etta James. Visitors can tap on musicians to discover their artistry make-up, flitting across history, accompanied by smash hits. One minute I was listening to Aretha Franklin's soulful tones, the next I was grooving to Donna Summer's disco and bopping to Beyoncé.

COUNTRY COMMUNITY

You might presume that a city teeming with talent would be competitive. As put by a Nashvillian: "There's more talent pouring your drinks in this city than in most bars in the US."

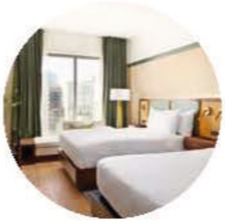
Yet Nashville has instead cultivated a close-knit community that champions aspiring artists and keeps stars down to earth. This is most evident at Carter Vintage Guitars on Eighth Avenue, where stars such as Post Malone,

HOTELS FOR HITMAKERS

Canopy by Hilton Nashville Downtown The Gulch
This new hotel opens on 24 May in the Gulch district, joining Marriott's W Nashville (see our review on page 79). Located a ten-minute walk from downtown, the hotel offers 181 rooms and suites, plus dining venues ranging from New York-style pizza pies to rooftop Mexican cuisine and Tennessee's largest list of agave spirits.

Songteller Hotel
Country legend Dolly Parton is behind this museum-meets-hotel in downtown Nashville, promising displays of her glitzy costumes, memorabilia and a soundtrack chronicling her illustrious career. It's due to open in 2026 and we've got our eyes and ears peeled for further details.

The Printing House Hotel, Tapestry Collection by Hilton
Set to open in July, this LEED-certified hotel in downtown Nashville draws inspiration from the city's printing legacy. Mid-century design is showcased across 187 rooms and suites, while the rooftop Letterpress Lounge & Terrace promises live music, sharing plates and unobstructed views of the city skyline.



→

Sheryl Crow and James Taylor casually browse strings alongside ordinary folk.

If the Grand Ole Opry is akin to a church, then Carter Vintage Guitars is also a mecca of sorts. Neat rows of pristinely restored vintage guitars glisten with Les Paul, Fender and Gibson tags, while a repair shop fixes up instruments, and soundproofed rooms offer the chance for a jam session – or an intimate show from an up-and-coming songwriter.

Just down the road, we meet the charismatic Ben Blackwell, White Stripes archivist and Dirtbombs drummer – who also just so happens to be Jack White's nephew. He takes us on a tour of Third Man Records, an eclectic maze of label offices, a distribution centre, photo studio and, most importantly, the Blue Room – the world's only live venue where you can record direct-to-disc.

Blackwell explains: "It's an extension of our commitment to analogue technology. We stopped recording that way in the 1970s, but we've brought it back. We want to capture something that happens in the moment, with no overdo's, stopping or starting."

This unique process has drawn the likes of The Kills, U2, The Shins and Pearl Jam to the studio, while crowds in the Blue Room can get a peek of engineers cutting the records.

CULINARY REVOLUTION

Nashville's traditional southern cuisine, grits and all, never goes out of fashion, but new restaurants and international flavours are elevating the largely beige offering.

Among these is Bad Idea, a contemporary wine bar and small plates hotspot in a beautifully restored church located in East Nashville – a trendy neighbourhood where I'm told "every second person is a producer".

A mezzanine with stained-glass fixtures recalls the venue's former life as a church, while chef Colby Rasavong's Laotian-inspired menu invites worship of the culinary kind. Spiced dishes range from pain perdu with kaya jam to scallop-stuffed crêpes, and 'Nam Khao' crispy rice salad with cashews and mint. A late-night menu, meanwhile, provides post-gig pick-me-ups of golden curry corndogs and chicken katsu.

ABOVE: The National Museum of African American Music

> 'There's more talent pouring your drinks in this city than in most bars in the US'

East Nashville is also home to high-end eatery Audrey's, a rustic barn-like space where dried flowers and herbs hang overhead, and an open live-fire kitchen showcases jars of vinaigrettes, relishes and pickles aplenty. Inspired by chef Sean Brock's Appalachian roots, the restaurant champions organic, biodynamic and sustainable produce along with indigenous plants – from paw-paw to sassafras and sarsaparilla. Dishes range from Appalachian-style chicken dumplings to shrimp and Cherokee White Eagle grits.

Both restaurants keep Nashville on the pulse of culinary trends, too. Bad Idea teams up with guest chefs for takeovers, while Audrey's boasts its own research and development lab.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't also fully indulge in Nashville's traditional "meat and three" cuisine – especially on a honky tonk hangover. I swapped my pescatarian hat for an altogether more 'country' number, embracing buckets of the spicy 'Shut the Cluck Up' fried chicken at the famous joint, Hattie B's.

Meanwhile, at brunch hotspot The Butter Milk Ranch in the upmarket 12 South neighbourhood, warm staff greet "y'all" before filling the table with buttermilk-clad fry-ups, biscuits and gravy, and creative croissants – with fillings from pistachio to salted honey butter.

Full of fried food and ears ringing with soulful melodies, it was time to catch my flight home. Settling into my seat, I discovered my neighbour sported the faint marks of an identical stamp from Robert's Western World – the lively bar where we both ended our honky tonk marathon that morning. We smiled at our shared badge of honour: a sign of being welcomed into the community, and a fitting souvenir for such a vibrant city – Nashville certainly has my stamp of approval.

GATEWAY TO MUSIC CITY

WITH PEOPLE FLOCKING to Nashville in throes, Music City is expanding its transport infrastructure. Nashville International Airport's US$4.5 billion 'New Horizon' expansion, complete with new and expanded concourses, additional facilities and enhanced baggage handling capacity, is set to complete in late 2028. Progress this year includes the opening of the Concourse D extension in July, which will feature five new gates, an outdoor terrace and more than 190,000 square feet of additional facilities – including five F&B venues and three retail outlets. New routes will also boost international visitor numbers to Music City, with Nashville forecast to welcome over half a million international visitors by 2026 – a 42% increase over 2023. Last month, Aer Lingus launched a four-times-weekly nonstop service from the equally musical Dublin, while Icelandair started seasonal flights from Reykjavik.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES, ADOBE STOCK, ALAMY, VICTORIA QUIRK

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Join the conversation on the Business Traveller Forum

Have your say

businesstraveller.com/forum

FROM BIGGER **MOVIE LIBRARIES** ON **PERSONAL DEVICES**, WE GO BEHIND THE

ERA,
ALTITUDE!

WORDS **RAMSEY QUBEIN**

TO STREAMING CONTENT
SCENES OF INFLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

Airline entertainment providers have a tough audience. Travellers have seen a lot of advancement in the last decade and both the variety and convenience factors of entertainment systems can be key decision makers when choosing an airline.

Perusing a roster of hundreds of movies, sitcoms, documentaries, games and music channels on a seatback screen is no longer something unique. As airlines attempt to one-up each other, customer expectations have risen.

So too has the size of the industry: according to a report by Research and Markets in September 2024, the inflight entertainment system industry is expected to reach US$6.6 billion by 2030.

Not only is it a form of entertainment for travellers, but it can also represent a profit centre for airlines. Chief operating officer Daniel Jacobs of Stellar Entertainment, which provides entertainment technology and content to several airlines, says: "Controlling the passenger's entertainment experience can open up new opportunities for ancillary revenue through advertising, e-commerce and loyalty integrations."

SKY-HIGH ENTERTAINMENT VAULTS

Emirates, which has had screens at every seat as far back as 1992, is widely recognised as having the largest IFE library in the skies. Today, it has nearly 6,500 programming options as part of its ICE system (Information, Communication and Entertainment), which includes complete boxsets of the latest Hollywood series and sitcoms.

Meanwhile, British Airways doubled its IFE content in late 2023 and now has more than 75 complete boxsets, while a partnership with Paramount+ sees it offer exclusive and original content, such as spy drama *Rabbit Hole*.

But quantity isn't the only quality passengers look for these days. Singapore Airlines' KrisWorld entertainment system is ideal for long and ultra-long-haul flights, where travellers can catch multiple flicks or even binge-watch an entire series. What's even better, however, is that after logging in, the system remembers what you have watched and where you left off on previous flights, so you can fast-forward to the exact spot.

Delta is doing something similar with its new Delta Sync system. The system, which is still rolling out across its aircraft, stores your favourite programmes to watch between flights. It will also recommend similar content that may be of interest based upon your past viewing habits, adding to its level of personalisation. The system also recognises personal milestones like birthdays or Medallion elite status. Coming soon to Delta Sync: the ability to watch ad-free content from your favourite podcasts and YouTube content creators.

Finnair, meanwhile, offers a "popular on this route" feature that recommends content that has been most selected by previous passengers on a particular route. This can be helpful for jet-lagged travellers running on fumes swiping through a vast array of choices, especially for those looking for entertainment in their own language or from regional producers.

RETRO VISION Inflight entertainment has come a long way from shared screens; SIA passengers can pick up where they left off with KrisWorld

ENTERTAINMENT LOGISTICS

Providing such content (and the hardware that goes with it) can be expensive. Emirates estimates it invested US$15,000 per seat to install seatback screens when they were first introduced. This is a cost that not every airline is willing to make, but in today's competitive environment, even low-cost airlines are beginning to recognise the value (and potential profits) that it can bring.

Companies such as Safran Passenger Innovations are working to make IFE systems more affordable as they develop lighter-weight products that make the economics of installing them (and flying them around the world) more reasonable for carriers. Its latest product promises to be 23% lighter than its predecessor while offering a higher-definition screen for a better viewing experience.

Jacobs says that the way content is delivered to airlines is changing, too. Instead of the traditional monthly content updates, airlines adjust content more frequently and can use real-time streaming solutions to give passengers access to the latest entertainment and "keep the inflight experience competitive with at-home streaming services".

> ‘Even low-cost airlines are beginning to recognise the value that it can bring’

With so much content, speed of downloading is just as important. New technology, dubbed ‘edge caching’, stores a download locally at the seat so that if the next passenger decides to watch the same thing, it does not put a strain on the entire system to download it again.

WHAT CUSTOMERS VALUE

Travel industry analyst Jamie Larounis of UpgradedPoints.com cites Bluetooth connectivity as his favourite new feature on airlines. As someone who carries a high-quality pair of headphones, he says that his are almost always better than what the airline provides, which improves his experience.

Emirates and Ethiopian are debuting a new system that allows the passenger to pair two Bluetooth devices simultaneously. It also allows passengers to watch live TV programmes while also having the ability to pause, rewind or fast-forward since the live stream is being cached on board the aircraft. This solves the problem for those that end up in the air during their favourite sports match or important political events they want to watch in real time. On Emirates’ A380s, live TV and sporting events are also broadcast in the bar area.

For Aaron Kokoruz, Allison Worldwide’s public relations SVP and a frequent flyer, it’s about recreating the at-home experience in the sky: “As someone who spends a lot of time in the air, my favourite inflight entertainment feature hands down is live TV.”

“I usually have the news on in the background when I’m working from home, so being able to keep that routine going at 35,000 feet makes the cabin feel a little more like my office in the sky,” he adds.

UPDATES FOR AVGEEKS

Forget the standard moving map that shows the current position of your aircraft. Aviation geeks have so much more to enjoy these days. Many aircraft are now equipped with tail cameras like those on Finnair’s A350s and Emirates’ A380s. This means that those passengers not sat in a window seat can still enjoy some exterior views of their aircraft.

Condor Airlines’ latest entertainment system has nearly two dozen cockpit-view landing videos at famous airports around the world like Cape Town, Madeira and Zanzibar. According to the airline, these are some of the most watched programmes on its entertainment system, and they are planning to add more.

United is a pioneer when it comes to creating aviation content for enthusiasts. Its Channel 9 audio system provides access to air traffic control interactions between various towers and its pilots. Its use is at the discretion of the individual cockpit crew, however. Coming soon is a new map feature that mimics what the control tower sees and shows an aerial view of what aircraft are on the ground and where. As you taxi to the runway on a United flight, you will know what planes are in front of and behind you.

Airlines that use Panasonic Avionics systems will soon be able to tap into Flightradar24 data, a popular aviation tracking site. The new software shows the airline’s entire fleet and the present position of all its aircraft around the world.

YOUR SCREEN OR MY SCREEN?

According to OAG: “The movement towards high-speed satellite wifi onboard has reshaped perspectives on inflight entertainment systems.” After all, even the biggest content libraries can’t tailor to every possible whim.

Unfettered access to the internet is the real prize when it comes to giving passengers access to their own content, but →

2A
Welcome
ice
Furious 7

MOVIE HUB Emirates’ ICE system has over 6,500 content options it's still a perk only offered by a handful of premium airlines like Air New Zealand, Delta, Emirates and Singapore Airlines.

As the only major legacy US carrier without seatback screens on domestic flights, American Airlines customers are left to their own vices (and devices) when it comes to short-haul entertainment. This is in stark contrast to moves by competitors Delta and United, which are investing heavily in upgrading seatback screens. American does at least offer in-seat power so that your own tablet, phone or laptop can stay charged to use instead of a seatback screen.

"It ends up cutting into my productivity because I have to pack both a tablet to stream content and a laptop to work just to replicate what's easily available on other carriers with seatback screens," says Kokoruz. "For frequent travellers, convenience really matters, and that's why I'll often choose Delta over American when I'm travelling for work."

Larounis agrees: "As a multi-tasker, it's great to be able to watch a movie on the airline's screen, while working on a laptop or iPad. Planes with individual screens seem much more luxurious than planes without."

This bring-your-own-device set-up is not unique to American. Other carriers like Avianca, Iberia and Southwest rely on a similar strategy, especially on narrowbody aircraft, in an effort to save weight and installation costs. But for the consumer, it means remembering to bring your own device.

'The future of the passenger experience lies in a fully connected cabin'

Jacobs suggests that this might be a missed opportunity for airlines to market information or services to passengers: "While bringing your own device to stream content has its place, it carries the risk of passengers disengaging [from the airline] to browse the internet or use other apps."

JetBlue has embraced a hybrid model of offering both seatback TVs with built-in content as well as the ability to stream content on personal devices. The airline has partnered with Peacock TV to feature its entire library via the seatback monitor or your personal device.

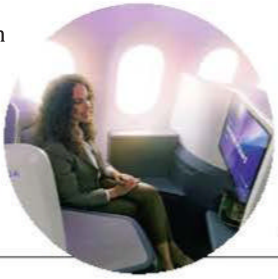
Research on customer satisfaction varies, however, with OAG studies showing that passenger satisfaction does not falter when people must use their own device, and even suggests that some travellers may prefer to use their own devices (or, shockingly, read a book). The only hiccup is initially educating passengers on how to access it.

But the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) has a different take. CEO Joe Leader writes: "Airlines investing in embedded entertainment systems dominate, capturing the lion's share of profits and achieving top customer satisfaction and net promoter scores."

And then there is the question of accessibility. Inflight entertainment should be a feature that caters to everyone. Air New Zealand is making sure of that on its newly retrofitted Boeing 787 Dreamliners. With the latest software update, they will feature a screen reader for those with "vision, auditory, motor or neurodivergent needs", developed in partnership with Deaf Aotearoa, Blind and Low Vision New Zealand, and Autism New Zealand.

According to Jacobs: "The future of the passenger experience lies in a fully connected cabin, where personalisation, real-time content updates, targeted advertising and seamless retail experiences come together to enhance the passenger experience."

Airlines that seize upon these opportunities the most stand to benefit. As the fight for eyeballs ramps up, passengers can sit back, grab the popcorn and enjoy the show.



NETFLIX AND CHILL Enjoy some down time with Air New Zealand's top 10 movies

TOP PICKS

Air New Zealand revealed its most popular inflight entertainment in 2024

	TOP 10 MOVIES (UNIQUE HITS)	TOP TV SHOWS (UNIQUE HITS)
1	The Beekeeper (128,607)	Bluey (510,919)
2	Anyone But You (104,813)	Peppa Pig (259,336)
3	Dune: Part Two (102,663)	The Big Bang Theory (238,069)
4	Napoleon (95,909)	Friends (178,202)
5	Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (95,318)	Paw Patrol (152,461)
6	Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (90,840)	Young Sheldon (131,604)
7	Mean Girls (89,608)	Game of Thrones (94,542)
8	The Equalizer 3 (84,893)	Louis Theroux Interviews (89,856)
9	The Fall Guy (79,437)	Piri's Tiki Tours (84,992)
10	One Life (78,343)	The Simpsons (83,787)

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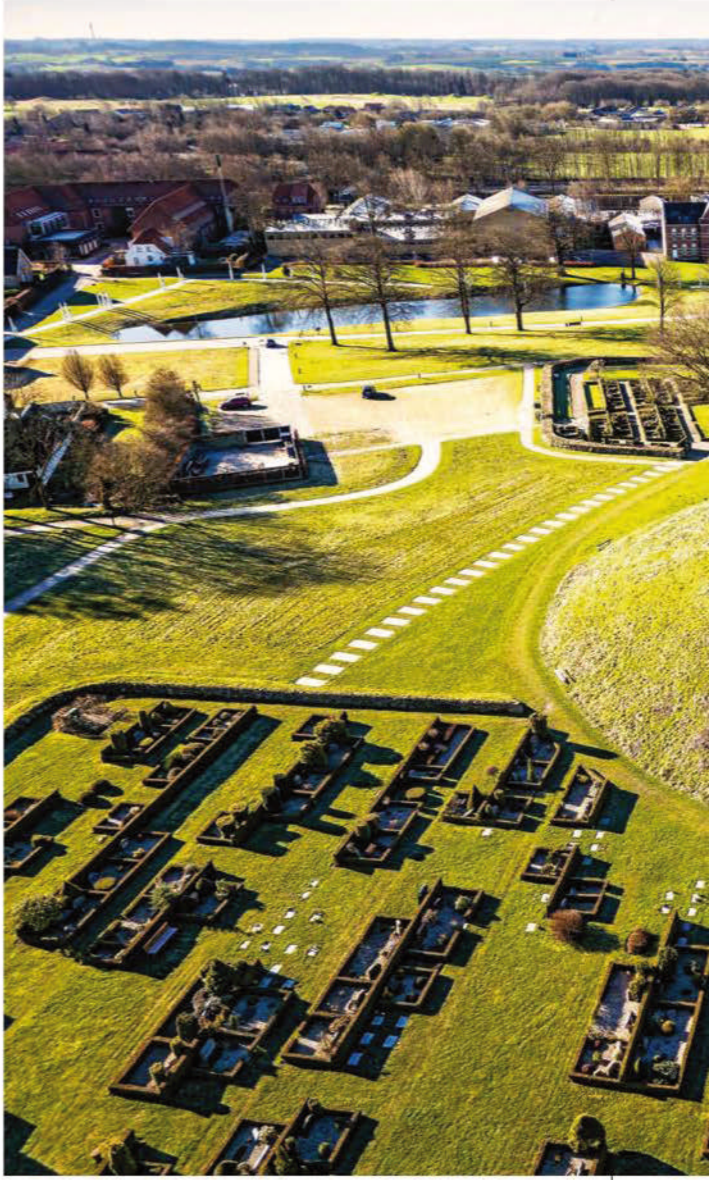
SEARCHING

HOW DID THE VIKING KING WHO UNIFIED SCANDINAVIA FIND HIS NAME ON ELECTRONIC DEVICES MORE THAN A MILLENNIUM LATER? JEREMY TAYLOR TAKES A ROAD TRIP ACROSS DENMARK TO TRACE THE CONNECTION FROM PAST TO PRESENT

FOR BLUETOOTH



ABOVE The site of the Jelling mounds, church and stones **RIGHT** Bluetooth headset **FAR RIGHT** Depiction of Viking ruler King Harald

Just under 4,000 hardy souls live in Jelling, a little town in lowland Denmark, where in early January the wind chill factor has dragged thermometers down to -11 degrees celsius. I'm wrapped in thermal layers, but the breeze from the Baltic is still biting to the bone.

Unlikely as it seems, Jelling was once a huge, fortified settlement and the centre of the Viking universe. Two mighty burial mounds dominate the landscape, but otherwise there are few places to shelter from the icy blast.

The Vikings who once hunted, farmed and fought on these lands wore heavyweight tunics fashioned from wool, linen and leather to beat the chill, with seal skins adding a waterproof layer, and the crackle of a longhouse hearth to warm chilled bones.

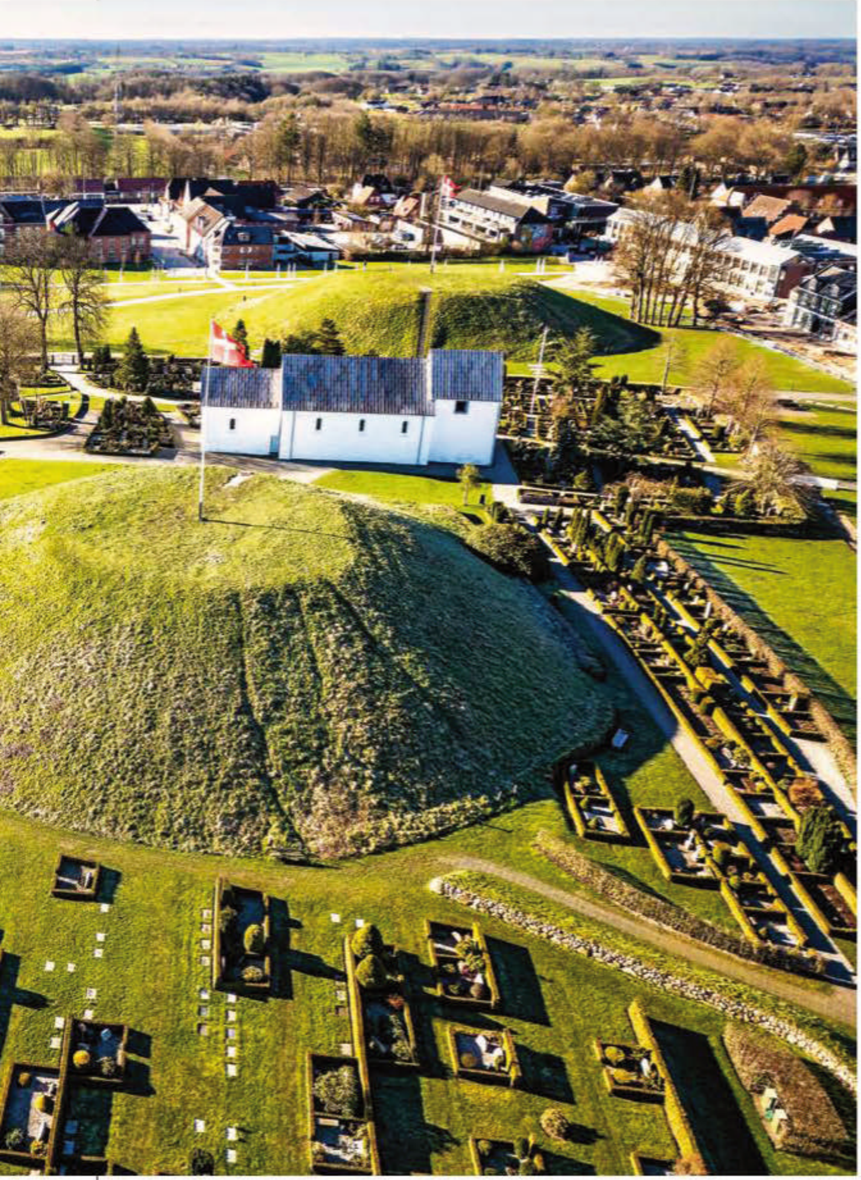
Over a thousand years later, these dwellings have turned to dust. But what remains are two giant rune stones, which contain vastly important information about Viking culture and the transition from paganism to Christianity. One bears the first inscription of Denmark as a nation and is regarded as the 'birth certificate' of the country. Today, Jelling is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, welcoming more than 150,000 tourists every year. But the ancient settlement also has a link to more recent history.

Bluetooth, the short-range wireless technology invented at the turn of the century, freed us from the tether of wired tech. From headphones to in-car hands-free, it changed the way we communicated and connected. It's a tool we often take for granted and we're used to seeing its little symbol everywhere – but what was it doing etched into an ancient Viking tablet? I'd come to find out, via a winding, scenic tour of Denmark.

SCOUTING THE LAND

My quest began in Frederiksborg Castle, which must be one of the most overlooked attractions in Denmark. A 50-minute drive north of Copenhagen, tourists typically flock to the battlements at nearby Kronborg instead, famous as the inspiration for Elsinore Castle in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Visitors can be seen walking the grounds and dining at Frederiksborg's Rhubarb Garden restaurant, taking in the castle's impressive Renaissance facade. The austere exterior



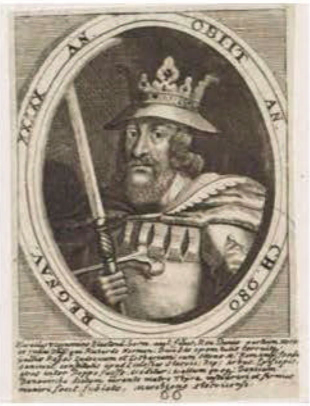
‘Jelling was once the centre of the Viking universe’

hides a wealth of riches that trace the history of Denmark, such as The Museum of National History. While fascinating, the collection only documents the past 500 years – nearly half a millennium after the Viking exploits. For the full history of Bluetooth, I would need to travel further.

But first, I set out to explore the seaside town of Gilleleje, buffeted by an incoming storm from the Kattegat, a troubled body of water that separates the North Sea from the Baltic (not, in fact, the Viking town Netflix would have you believe). The coast of Sweden is a few miles away but it’s difficult to imagine a safe crossing in a modern boat, let alone a Viking longship.

Part of the Danish Riviera in North Zealand, Gilleleje was also an important escape route for Jews fleeing to neutral Sweden during the Second World War. Thanks to the bravery of local people and fishermen in October 1943, more than 7,000 Danish Jews were ferried to safety before the Nazis could act.

That evening, I check in to the historic Badehotel in Gilleleje and set about researching Denmark’s most famous ancient monarch. Warm in front of the lobby fire, I read how King Harald ‘Bluetooth’ Gormsson united Denmark and Norway in 958 – his →



FOUNDING BLUETOOTH

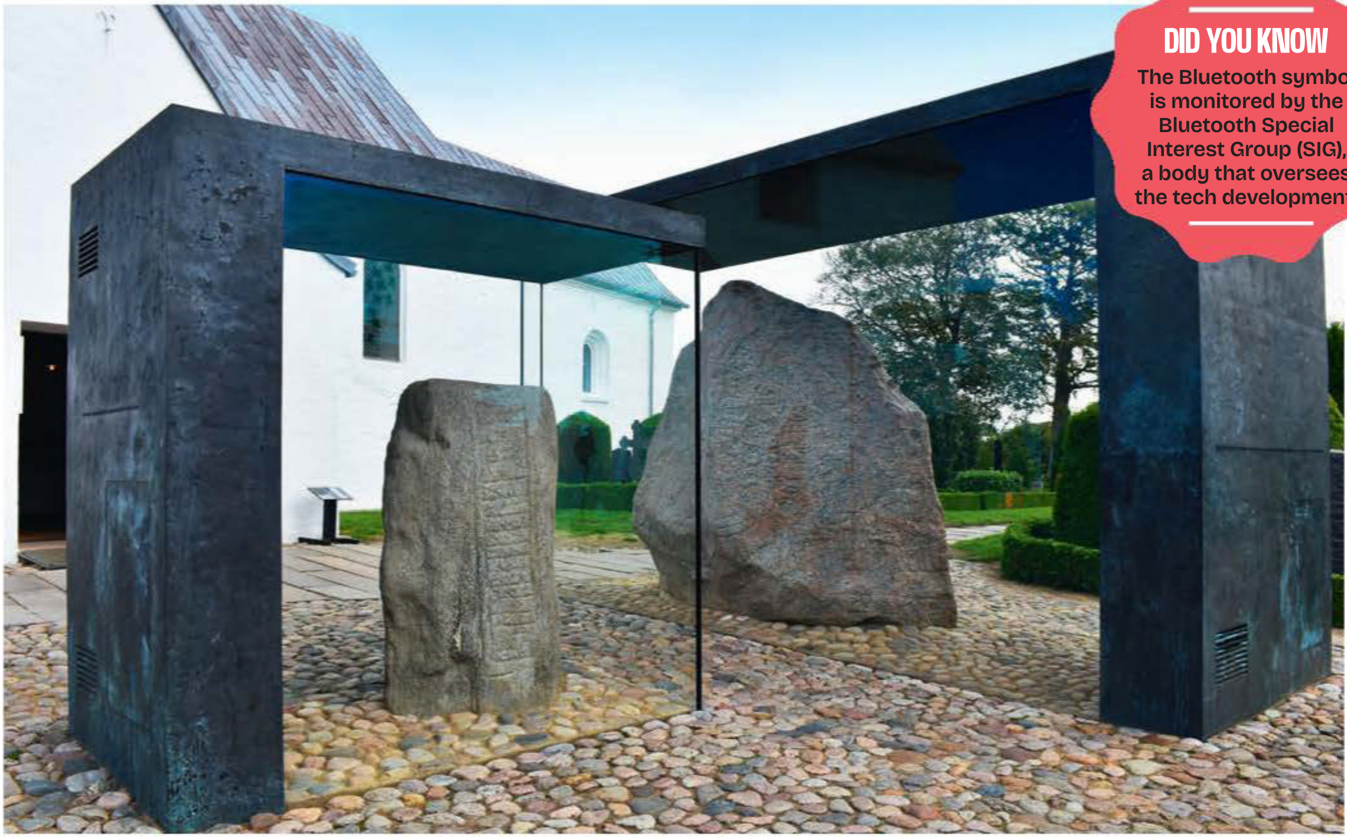
THE TECHNOLOGY WAS dreamed up in 1989 through the collaborative efforts of Swedish physician and inventor, Johan Ullman, Ericsson Mobile chief technology officer, Nils Rydbeck, and other communications specialists from the likes of Intel and Nokia. The goal was to develop wireless headsets.

It was Intel’s Jim Kardach, who suggested Bluetooth as a codename – expecting marketing to come up with a better name. Much like I had, Kardach read a book on Viking history, and learned how Bluetooth had brought two nations together – just as the new technology was designed to do.

In the *EE Times* in 2008, Kardach wrote: “Thumbing through the pages, I found a picture of a giant rock, or runic stone, which depicted the chivalry of Harald Bluetooth. Harald had united Denmark, so it occurred to me that this would make a good codename.

“Needless to say, the codename turned out to be pretty good. It took hold in the press and after a while became synonymous with short range radios.”

The first Bluetooth gadgets began to appear in 1999 – readers will no doubt remember the must-have ‘state-of-the-art’ Bluetooth headsets that clipped over the ear. The Ericsson T39 was the first mobile with Bluetooth technology to go on sale to the public in 2001, and Audi was the first car manufacturer to offer a Bluetooth audio in-car experience in the luxury A8.



DID YOU KNOW

The Bluetooth symbol is monitored by the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG), a body that oversees the tech development.

nickname derived from the colour of a dead tooth. A powerful Viking leader, his reign marked a turning point in Danish history, Christianising the pagan country and building fortifications in an era of upheaval and change.

ON THE MOVE, SCANDI STYLE

After an introductory history lesson, I return to the road. Denmark consists of several large islands, linked to the Jutland Peninsula, and all have historic clues if you know where to look.

Some of the most famous structures constructed under King Harald's 10th century reign are the ring-shaped fortresses located in Aggersborg, Fyrkat, Nonnebakken, Trelleborg and Borgring – strategically positioned on important land and sea routes across the peninsula and islands.

While the waterways once provided the quickest mode of transport, today the archipelago is connected by enormous bridges – the longest measuring more than 4.2 miles. I've chosen to drive in a tech-laden Scandinavian car. The new Polestar 4 is a battery-powered coupé and, like every modern car, features hands-free Bluetooth built-in, meaning I can send music and telephone calls straight to the dashboard infotainment system, while enjoying the rolling countryside and rustic coastlines.

The EV's range is up to 385 miles – more than enough to ferry me to my next destination – 175 miles due west to the Trapholt Museum of Modern Art, Craft and Design. A centre of creative thinking, the avant garde collection responds to an ever-changing world – a place the inventors of Bluetooth would have found truly inspirational.

> ‘The Viking leader's nickname came from the colour of a dead tooth’

Kongernes Jelling
Vikinger, konger & pral

FROM TOP: The Jelling stones; the museum in Jelling, plus the Polestar 4

FINAL PIECES

The only piece of the puzzle remaining was to figure out the source of inspiration for the Bluetooth logo. That night, I plug the Polestar into one of the guest chargers at Haraldskaer Sinatur Hotel – just a Viking axe throw from Jelling – the ‘home’ of Bluetooth.

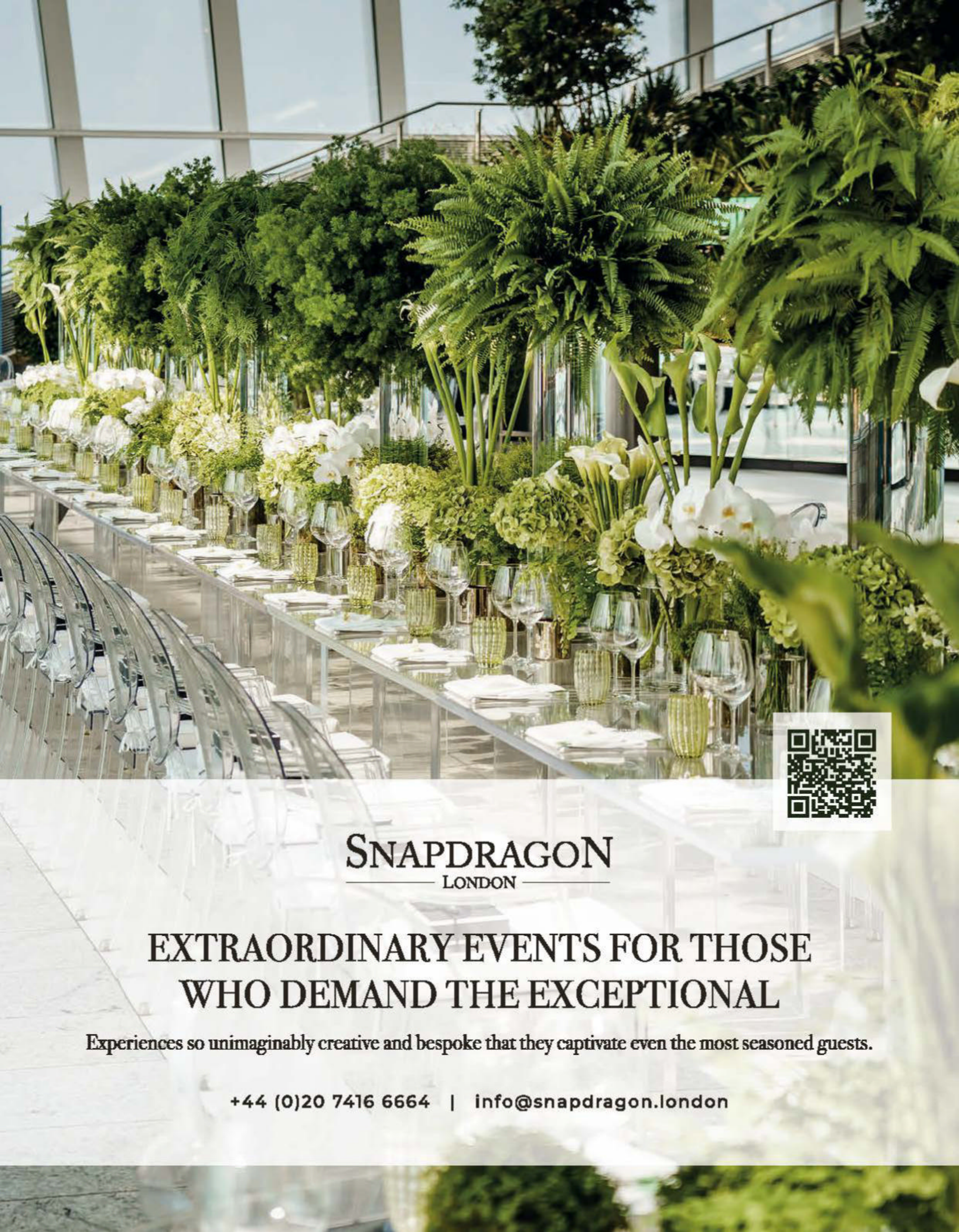
The answer is written in stone – literally. In 965, King Harald erected a rune stone by one of the burial mounds in memory of his parents. A heavyweight chunk of self-publicity, the intricate inscription gives an account of his own achievements, as well as an image of Christ, which is the oldest example in Scandinavia.

Today the Jelling Stone is encased in a glass box, next to a 12th-century church. With helpful translation from a National Museum guide, it's possible for me to make out the Danish runic inscription: “King Harald ordered these kumbls made in memory of Gorm, his father, and in memory of Thyra, his mother; that Harald who won for himself all of Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian.”

Look closely, and you'll see the Viking runes for H and B – King Harold's initials, one merged on top of the other – the makings of the famous Bluetooth logo.

Technology in King Harald's day was limited to advances in shipbuilding, navigation and warfare. However, I imagine the monarch with a rotten tooth would have been rather pleased to know his name had been forever immortalised. BT

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK, GETTY IMAGES, ALAMY, JEREMY TAYLOR



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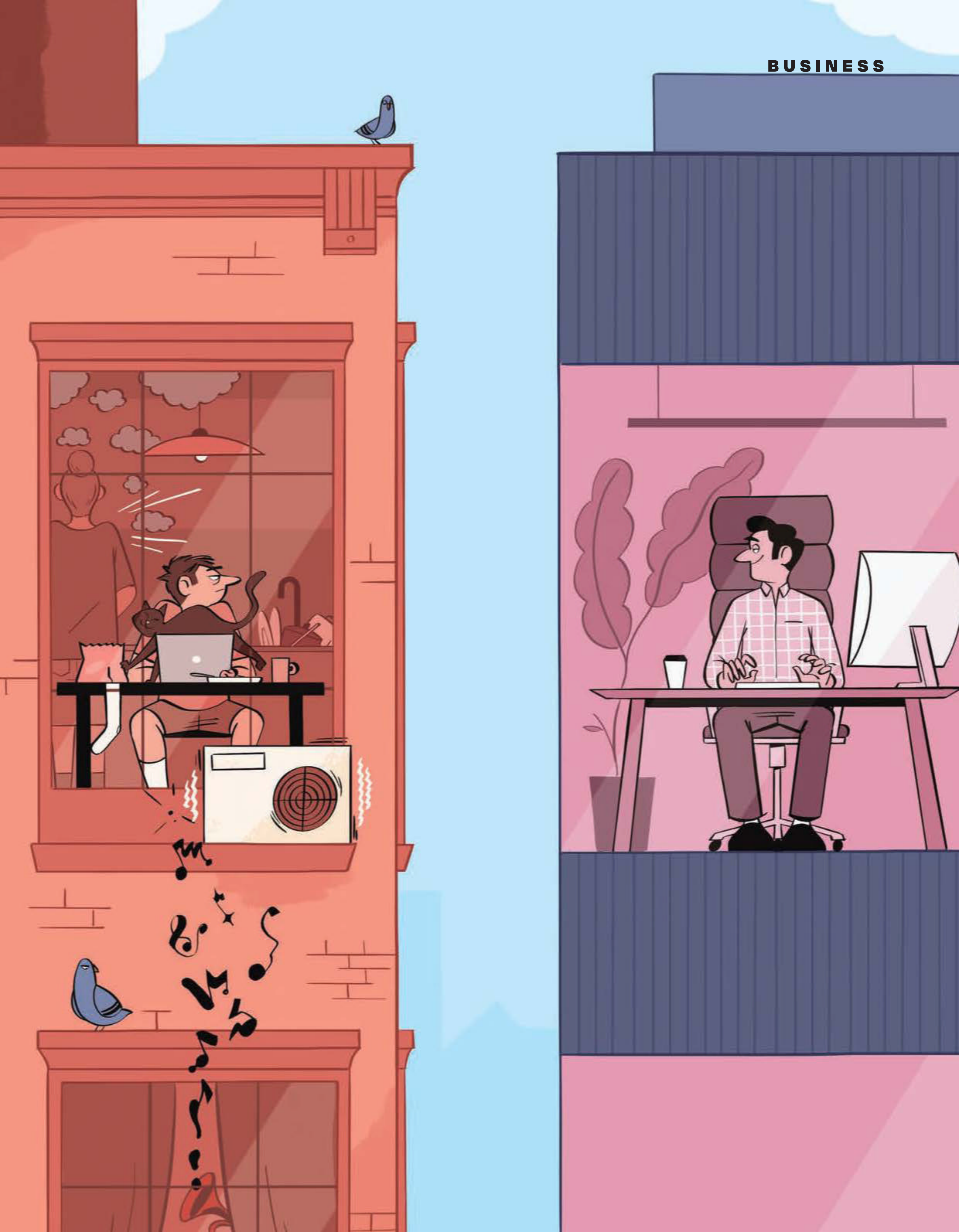
REMOTE CONTROL

AFTER THE PANDEMIC, BOSSES AROUND THE GLOBE ARE PONDERING THIS QUESTION:
DOES WORKING FROM HOME WORK?

WORDS **RICHARD LORD**
ILLUSTRATIONS **ANTONIO SORTINO**

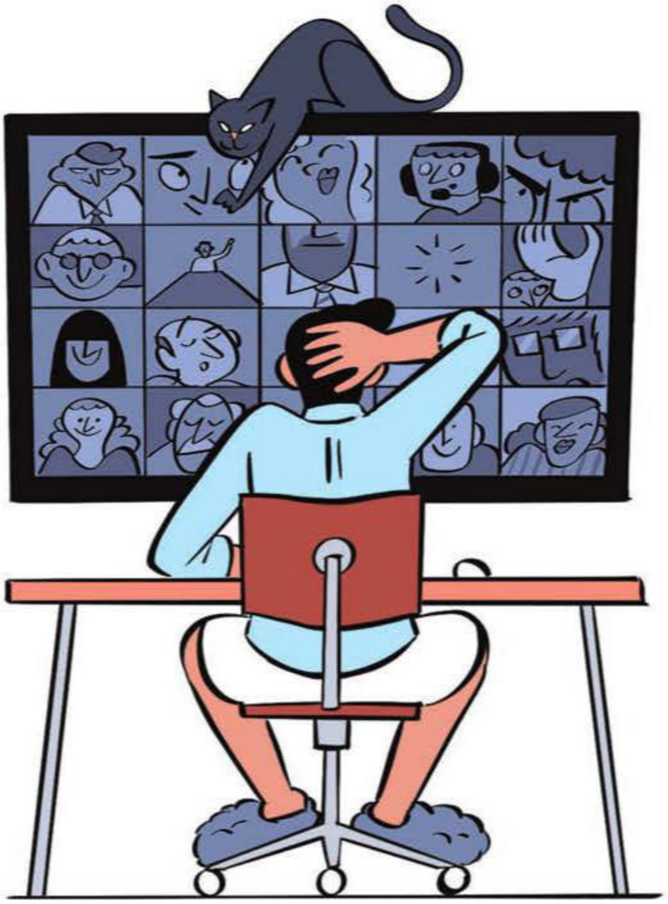


There have been some, shall we say, *colourful* contributions to the ongoing debate regarding remote work, revealing some rather entrenched views.

Here, for example, is JPMorgan Chase chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon at a recent town hall event in the United States, in response to a petition signed by 950 company staff requesting more flexible working arrangements.

"Don't give me this s**t that work-from-home-Friday works. I call a lot of people on Fridays and there's not a goddamn person you can get hold of. It simply doesn't work. It doesn't work for creativity. It slows down decision-making. I've had it with this kind of stuff. I don't care how many people sign that f***ing petition."

The issue of flexible work, then, continues to be highly contested territory. Not so much a question of WFH as 'WTF?'. Employees, broadly speaking, like it, although there are exceptions. Among employers, the picture is far more mixed, with a lot of companies recently mandating a return to the office. Everyone is trying to figure out what the future of flexible working looks like, with the key question being: does work from home actually work?



WFH GOES MAINSTREAM

Remote work wasn't really much of a thing until roughly half a century ago, when emerging technologies started to make it more feasible. Clearly, though, what really made it a mainstream option was the Covid-19 pandemic, when it became a widespread necessity. For many, that period was an epiphany, as dire predictions of staff slacking off largely failed to come true, and many people realised they liked the flexibility.

Consultancy firm Mercer's latest *Global Talent Trends* report found that 71% of employees say remote work has improved their work-life balance, 57% feel it allows them to concentrate better, 62% feel more productive and 70% report lower stress levels.

"Additionally, many employees [60%] feel a stronger sense of belonging to their organisation while working from home," says Gary Chin, rewards leader for Mercer Hong Kong.

"Overall, the findings suggest that WFH has led to favourable outcomes for many employees, highlighting the importance of flexible work arrangements in enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity," he adds.

'There's no black-and-white answer, but WFH is a lever you can pull'

That's certainly true for Susan Wallis, a UK-based technology director for a global bank that allows employees to work from home two or three days a week.

"You get more time for yourself; get to spend more time with family and are there for your children; have no commute; get more sleep due to fewer early starts in the mornings; and reduce your costs for eating and drinking during the day, and for commuting," she says.

There can be benefits for companies, too: for example, remote work can help to produce a happier, more motivated workforce; allows them to employ people who don't live so close to the office; and provides sustainability benefits by cutting out commuting.

"Is it a good or a bad thing for the enterprise? There's no black-and-white answer," says John Hazan, global talent solutions lead for consultancy Bain & Company. "But it's a new lever you can pull. Certainly when you ask employees about what motivates them at work, flexibility is in the top three. Think of all the levers you can pull in terms of flexibility – it can be about when, where and how to work."

OUT OF OFFICE, OUT OF SIGHT

When it comes to productivity, the picture is unclear, with plenty of studies suggesting both positive and negative effects. Scepticism from employers tends to focus on the lags in communication that remote work can cause, plus the lack of physical interaction with colleagues, potentially hampering the sort of serendipitous creative inspiration that can happen when people are in the same room and can spark off each other.

Ada To, vice president of human resources at Hong Kong hospitality company Wharf Hotels, comments: “Working from home offers benefits such as increased flexibility and reduced overhead costs. However, it can also result in feelings of isolation, as well as communication difficulties, which may complicate collaboration.”

Hazan from Bain consultancy, though, is resistant to the idea that remote working necessarily involves a loss of cultural cohesion. “We have friends and family that we get along with – are we checking on them every day?” he says. “There is much more to a culture than just meeting a person face-to-face every day. It’s more important to be together intentionally at limited times. When you ask people to be in the office, make sure it’s for a good reason – because they need to be there, not because you just want them to.”

For many companies, this is as much a cultural decision, one based on their instinctive beliefs about the best way of working, as an empirical one. The issue of trust looms large – do organisations trust their employees to work effectively if no one is physically overseeing them? One answer is to focus the company’s evaluation of that issue on what employees achieve rather than what they put in – in management-speak, their outputs rather than their inputs – which, let’s face it, they probably should be doing anyway.

Murray Sarelius, KPMG’s regional lead for Global Mobility Services in Asia-Pacific, says: “Whether companies are supportive or less in favour of working from home appears to be based on a mix of evidence and instinctive feelings. Many organisations track employee sentiment, including about flexible working, but the final decision may be heavily influenced by the personal preference of senior leaders within the organisation.”

For Hazan, making remote work successful requires a change of emphasis from management: “The key issue is alignment of leadership on the benefits of hybrid work. They need to fully believe in this and give freedom to front-line managers to make it work on the ground. It needs a different culture from front-line managers. They need to be even more benevolent and open to team members, and much clearer on their expectations.”

This is very much the way financial services company DBS Bank Hong Kong manages its teams, for example, allowing them to work remotely up to 40% of the time – 100% for new parents and caregivers – and judging their outputs.

“We empower our employees to choose whether WFH or working at any of our offices fits their activities on a particular day,” says Betty Lam, head of human resources, Hong Kong, for the bank. “Managers are empowered to manage the hybrid work arrangements of their teams. We have established robust performance and development practices to ensure employees are fairly evaluated and rewarded based on their deliverables, against performance goals, regardless of their working location.”

WORKING BY NUMBERS

60%

of the global workforce now works remotely at least part of the time

DENMARK

is seen as the best country for remote work

20-24

year olds (globally) are least likely to apply for remote roles

60%

of people cite having no commute as a top benefit of WFH

CANADA

has an average of 1.7 paid full days a week WFH. For China it’s 0.8

SOURCES: GLOBAL SURVEY OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Of course, not everyone even wants to work from home. For some, it can be socially isolating; for others, a cramped and crowded apartment can make for a challenging workplace. Then there are demographic and geographical variations. On average, women tend to value it more, perhaps reflecting that in many societies, they are still expected to take on disproportionate childcare and other domestic responsibilities. Asia works from home less than Europe and a lot less than the US, averaging under a day a week. People in the Asia-Pacific region are also less enthusiastic about the prospect; across many parts of the continent, in-person presence has long been prized as a visible manifestation of cohesion and respect.

Nonetheless, remote work is becoming a critical component of the ways companies attract and retain staff, and is likely to become commoditised and part of their value proposition.

David Mayes, principal, Global Mobility Services for KPMG in the US, believes this could reflect the relative strength of a company’s position.

“Where organisations are broadly being successful and talent management procedures are driving a strong pipeline of key talent, there is negligible pressure to make any fundamental shifts around culture of remote working,” he says. “Where organisations are facing economic headwinds or aren’t finding talent with the right skills available in succession plans, then remote working is a relatively low-cost lever to pull in order to disrupt current ways of working and create a real or perceived shift in culture.”

There’s even the prospect of differential compensation, with a premium paid to those who are physically present. In Mercer’s *Global Talent Trends* report, 37% of respondents said they would be willing to give up 10% of their salary for the ability to work flexible hours. One thing’s for sure: remote work isn’t going away. BT

NEW TECH WONDERS

Rollable screens and bone-conduction headphones are just a few of the futuristic possibilities

WORDS **GEOFFREY MORRISON**

The Consumer Electronics Show, held every January, offers a glimpse at where tech is heading for the year and beyond. At CES 2025, more than 140,000 people descended onto Las Vegas to poke, gawk, laud and scoff at the wares of 4,500 companies big and small. These upcoming products could become must-have gear or they might disappear into obscurity. Will the latest AI-enabled feature finally bring that nonsense technology into the mainstream? Will some gadget from a tiny company revolutionise the world? Probably neither but, at the very least, these were the top gadgets to ogle.

Lenovo ThinkBook Plus Gen 6 Rollable

At first glance, Lenovo's ThinkBook Plus Gen 6 Rollable looks like any other laptop. It has a 14-inch OLED screen that, as far as laptop screens go, doesn't seem too revolutionary. But it's what the screen can do that's remarkable: it *rolls*. As in, make a gesture in front of the above-screen camera and it extends vertically to 16.7 inches. It looks like something out of a sci-fi movie. As someone who travels with smaller laptops for their easy portability, having the option for an occasionally larger screen is enticing. This opens up a wealth of possibilities: multitasking, seeing more rows in a spreadsheet, coding, editing photos, and more. ***US$3,499 (£2,703) at lenovo.com, available from June***

Shokz OpenMeet

Shokz is best known for its headphones that primarily transmit sound through the bones in your head. You read that right. Bone-conduction headphones let you hear the world around you as well as whatever you're listening to, since they're not in or on your ears. It's an interesting effect, and in many situations – like if you're running – it's a safer one. The lightweight OpenMeet uses bone-conduction and traditional headphone drivers for a headset that should be comfortable to wear for long hours. These are ideal if you work from home and need to hear what your kids are up to, or equally make do in an office to hear the bellows of a boss who's equally needy. ***£229.99 at uk.shokz.com***

Belkin Stage PowerGrip

The Stage PowerGrip combines several useful features that would make life easier for anyone who shoots a lot of content with their phone. First, and most obvious, it's an ergonomic grip to make holding the phone easier. Inside is a large, 10,000 mAh battery, which not only has wireless charging but also includes USB-C outputs to charge other devices. It even has a retractable USB-C charging cable. It's magnetic, so you'll need at least an iPhone 12 or a MagSafe case for an older or Android phone. ***Price upon request at belkin.com, available this month***

TCL Nxtpaper 11 Plus Tablet and 60 XE Nxtpaper 5G Smartphone

The marketing around TCL's Nxtpaper is a bit hyperbolic. It's a different way of approaching the LCD tech found in every tablet and budget phone. However, that doesn't mean it's not interesting. With a matte screen and lower blue-light emissions, both the tablet and phone should be easier to stare at, as well as having better visibility in direct sunlight. If you're looking to combine the features of a smartphone with a display that's easier on the eyes – more like an e-reader – these might do the trick. ***$199 for smartphone at tcl.com, available this year***

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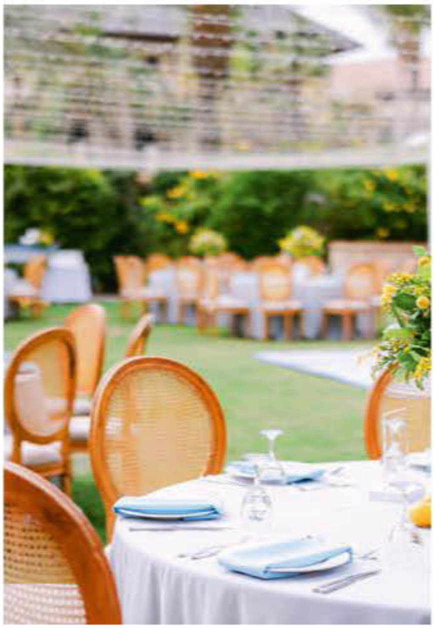

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✈ **RUH**

Fairmont Hotel Riyadh

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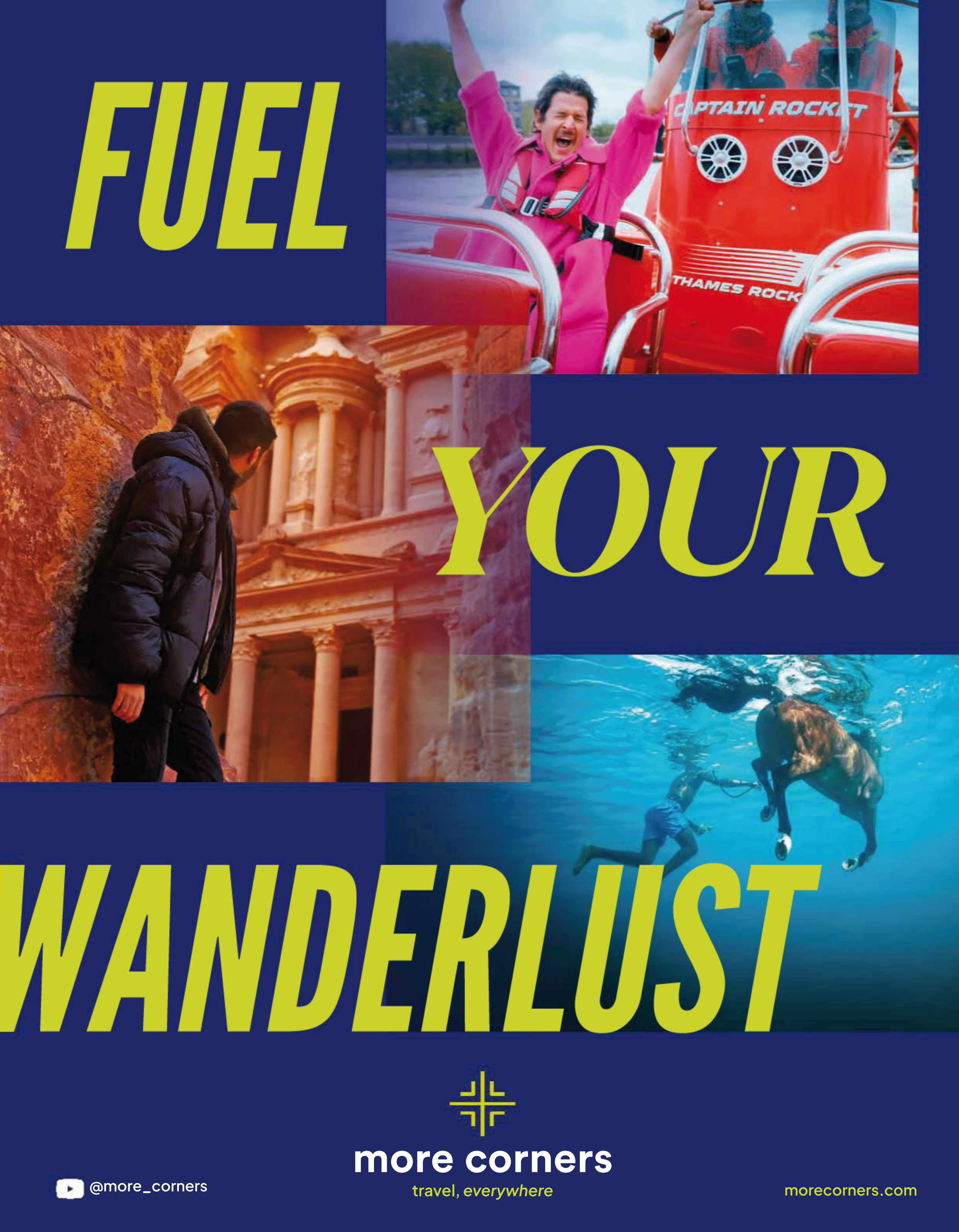
Located 15 minutes from the King Abdullah Financial District, this five-star hotel offers nearly 5,400 square metres of event space, including two ballrooms and 10 meeting rooms. The ballrooms—spanning over 1,500 square metres each—can accommodate up to 1,000 guests, making them ideal for large-scale exhibitions, conferences and weddings. They can also be tailored for more intimate settings, such as board meetings and receptions. Designed with style and functionality in mind, the spaces are equipped with modern technology and flooded with natural light, ensuring an inspiring and productive atmosphere. A standout feature of the hotel is its renowned Outside Catering team, which offers bespoke culinary creations for every occasion. Led by international chefs, the team crafts custom menus that reflect each event's theme, tone, and cultural nuances. From high-profile conferences to more intimate celebrations, Fairmont Hotel Riyadh provides an unparalleled setting for events that leave a lasting impression. fairmont.com/en/hotels/riyadh/fairmont-riyadh.html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AIRLINE REVIEW
Singapore Airlines A350-900 business

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Review

Putting business travel to the test

FLIGHT REVIEW

Singapore Airlines A350-900 business class

We get a first taste of award-winning chef Monica Galetti's spring and summer menus onboard Singapore Airlines' daily flight from London Gatwick

FLIGHT Review

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

Background

Singapore Airlines launched flights from Gatwick to Singapore in June 2024, operated by its A350-900 aircraft. At the end of March, the route increased from five-times-weekly to daily.

SQ309 departs from Gatwick's North Terminal at 0925 and arrives at Changi T3 at 0615 the following morning. Singapore Airlines doesn't have a lounge at Gatwick, however eligible passengers are granted access to the No1 Lounge.

The seat

As previously reviewed (find out more at businesstraveller.com/tried-and-tested) business class is split across two cabins, with 42 lie-flat seats in a 1-2-1 configuration with direct aisle access.

Upholstered in plum-coloured leather, every seat is spacious, with plenty of storage, a power adaptor, two USB ports and an HDMI port, an 18-inch IFE monitor packed with entertainment content, plus complimentary (and reliable) wifi on multiple devices.

While there's no sliding door (yet), the winged shell makes it feel private. One downside is having to manually flip the seat over into a bed, but I found the seat comfortable.

New reusable amenity kits are by Le Labo, crafted from waxed cotton canvas. The contents are limited, but luxurious – hand cream, refreshing face mist and lip balm. Familiar items like dental kit, earplugs and eye mask are missing, however these can be requested or found in the lavatories.

The flight

The flight began with a personal welcome from staff and a glass of Piper-Heidsieck 2018 Champagne.

Monica Galetti has created impressive menus for flights from London Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester in premium cabins – the kind that wouldn't look out of place in a fine dining restaurant. We previewed dishes from the spring and summer menus – served until the end of May and August respectively.

The summer appetiser is a colourful, refreshing heritage tomato and bresaola salad, dressed with bold verjus and black garlic emulsion and featuring a smoky undertone thanks to bacon salt. The spring highlight is a main of tender stone bass, dressed with tomato and cucumber salsa atop a silky cauliflower purée dotted with capers (see image on previous page). Desserts range from a rhubarb cake with vanilla and ginger crème fraîche in spring, to a raspberry pistachio tartlet in summer.

Customers can also select a European or Asian menu onboard, or pre-order a main course via the Book the Cook service up to 24 hours ahead of flying – all easily done via the Singapore Airlines app.

Breakfast was served around two hours before landing, with hot dishes or continental style (I was still stuffed, so opted for some fruit and a coffee). There are also snacks and lighter meals available throughout the flight.

FINE FLYING Comfortable seats and gourmet food make for a luxury onboard experience

'The impressive menus wouldn't look out of place in a fine dining restaurant'

Arrival

It's rather discombobulating when you arrive at Changi just shy of 6am (10pm in the UK), since you've skipped an entire night. Thankfully, I was en route to my hotel for a nap in no time, thanks to the speedy eGates at immigration.

VERDICT

Singapore Airlines continues to offer an excellent business class product, with friendly service and spacious seats that make long-haul flights speed by – particularly when you're kept busy with fine dining at altitude. We look forward to testing out the new business class in 2026.

FACTS

FLIGHT DURATION 12 hours 50 minutes
SEAT WIDTH 28 inches
BED LENGTH 79 inches fully-flat
PRICE Return business class fare from Gatwick to Singapore starts from £3,984.
CONTACT singaporeair.com

GOOD-TO-KNOW

A SGD1.1 billion multi-year retrofit programme will see new business class seats across SIA's A350-900 long-haul and ultra long-range (ULR) aircraft by 2027.

IMAGES COURTESY OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES

WORDS
ALESANDRA DUBIN

California dreaming

A new Delta One lounge puts guests in a Pacific state of mind

DELTA HAS elevated the art of preflight relaxation with its Delta One lounge at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), which opened in October 2024. It's a luxurious oasis that removes the traveller from the airport chaos, offering a serene space for business class flyers. After the success of a flagship lounge at JFK, this 929 sqm retreat provides privacy, exclusivity and comfort.

Location

The lounge is in Terminal 3 at LAX, conveniently adjacent to the Delta Sky Club. It's perfectly situated for the airline's premium passengers, offering easy access from the Delta One check-in area. Travellers can bypass crowds and glide directly into the space via a private elevator. A bespoke fragrance transports visitors into a haven of calm, setting the tone for the entire experience.

What's it like?

The lounge is smaller than its JFK counterpart but packs a luxurious punch. The 200-seat space features decor inspired by the hues of a Los Angeles sunset.

The Icon Bar, with its leather and walnut accents and a quartzite and onyx backbar, draws on the colours of the Pacific coastline. Architectural details pay homage to LA's eclectic mix of Art Deco and Modernism. One of the facility's standout areas is the library lounge, perfect for dining or catching up on work. If you're in the mood for fresh air, however, an outdoor terrace comes complete with Delta's signature Missoni pillows and sweeping tarmac views.

Facilities

This lounge features a top-tier dining experience with a menu that rotates regularly. The culinary offering features plenty of variety – from crispy duck tacos to roasted corn pizza. I started with a smooth truffle parsnip soup, followed by a delicious salmon dish with haricots verts. Delta also offers location-themed bento boxes, with dishes representing Paris, Tokyo and Boston.

The attention to detail doesn't stop at food. The lounge has eight private wellness pods, equipped with zero-gravity and full-body massage chairs. A special lamp in this area helps travellers acclimate to time zones. The relaxation area also offers refreshing towels and premium skincare products by Grown Alchemist to help combat the effects of long-haul travel.

GOOD-TO-KNOW

It's open to Delta One flyers and premium passengers on partner airlines including Air France, LATAM, KLM, Korean Air and Virgin Atlantic.

VERDICT

Whether you're looking for a moment of peace in a wellness pod or want to enjoy a signature cocktail while watching planes take off, Delta One at LAX is the perfect pre-flight retreat.

BEST FOR

Passengers seeking to relax and enjoy a three-course meal before a long-haul or transcontinental flight.

DON'T MISS

The bar adds a layer of fun with cocktails named after airport codes, such as a Tahiti (PPT) mai tai or a London (LHR) gin.
delta.com

IMAGES **JASON DEWEY 2024**

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

Shangri-La Singapore

Choose from three luxury wings at the Orchard Road-based hotel

What's it like?
Hidden among the tropical greenery of Orange Grove Road, Shangri-La Singapore provides a welcome hideaway from the Orchard Road shopping stretch nearby. The hotel opened in 1971 and has expanded to offer 792 rooms across three wings – each with their own look and appeal.

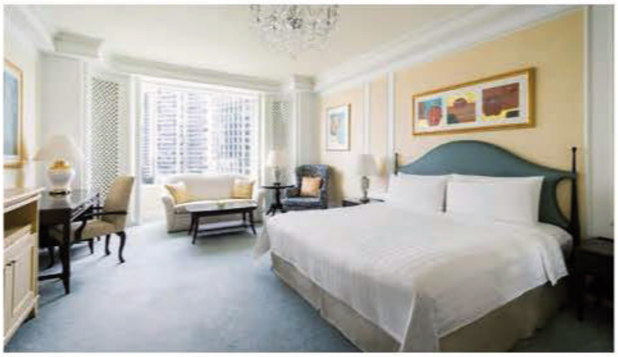
Tower Wing is the oldest of the three, though it underwent a major renovation in 2017. Here, guests are met with a gleaming lobby of soaring columns, a leafy feature wall and a hanging cloud of doves above the check-in desks.

GOOD-TO-KNOW

The quietest time to grab a buffet breakfast at The Line is 6am to 7.30am (peak hours are 8.30-10am).

Next to be built was Garden Wing in 1978. As its name suggests, it looks over a bank of water features, carp-fish ponds and more than 100 species of exotic plants.

Valley Wing is the newest and most premium of the three wings, and certainly caters to a refined crowd. Within its walls is a circular conservatory for dining, and a separate lounge-lobby area with free-flowing Champagne. It's also home to a vast presidential suite with former illustrious guests including Bon Jovi and several US presidents.



Rooms
I was met by a calming wave of vanilla musk and sandalwood (the notes of Shangri-La's signature scent) upon entering my Valley Wing Deluxe Room. Interiors are equally soothing in muted hues of blue and yellow, with cream Jacquard fabric for the furnishings.

Concealed behind a dark-wood separating wall, the bathroom features a double sink, elegant corner bathtub and separate shower, with a dim-lighting option that gives it a spa-like glow. There's a dressing table in the room too, complete with a floor-length mirror and a Dyson hairdryer.

Personal touches include a copy of *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton – the story that inspired Shangri-La – as well as a bookmark and a chocolate bar on the bedside table.

Though the room certainly lends itself well to relaxation, there's ample desk space and accessible plugs for work too.

Facilities
The hotel offers eight F&B spaces, a small shop stocking local food, a large gym, pool, tennis courts and a spa. Try the 'Have a Break' cocktail if you visit Origin Bar – a rich mix of matcha, dark chocolate and sherry.

When it comes to entertaining, there are several ballrooms and conference rooms, the largest able to accommodate up to 1,400 guests.

VERDICT

An elegant retreat away from the bustle of Singapore's busy shopping spot, with all that's needed to wind down, indulge and relax.

BEST FOR

Soothing stays and luxury service.

DON'T MISS

Afternoon tea and evening canapés in the Valley Wing lounge for all Valley Wing guests.

PRICE
Prices start from £249 in Tower Wing, £326 in Garden Wing and £409 for Valley Wing

CONTACT
22 Orange Grove Road, 258350,
Singapore; +65 6737 3644;
shangri-la.com

IMAGES **COURTESY OF SHANGRI-LA**

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

W Nashville

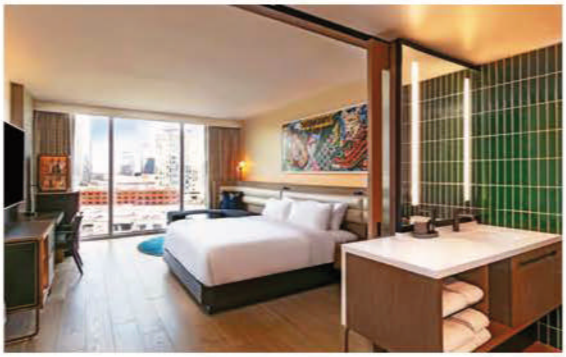
The playful Marriott brand shows promise in Music City

What's it like?
W Hotels debuted in the Music City in 2021 with a gleaming 14-storey mirrored tower in the revitalised Gulch district – a former railroad yard packed with music venues, eateries and street art (including a 25-foot Jimi Hendrix mural on the facade in case you forget your soulful surrounds).

The hotel features 286 rooms and 60 suites, along with several dining venues and wellness facilities. The mixed-use lobby has a marketplace feel, combining reception desks with a boutique, café and bar – with plenty of comfy seating dispersed among these outlets.

Rockwell Group is behind the modern interiors, which combine the neighbourhood's industrial heritage with vibrant murals and references to Nashville. Expect the likes of iron, steel, wood, leather and polished concrete, plus an emphasis on indoor-outdoor spaces.

The design is more muted than other W Hotels, but this is no bad thing. I was impressed with this direction, which feels a little more serious while still incorporating playful touches.



Rooms
In keeping with W's playful ethos, categories include Wonderful (lower floors), Spectacular (mid floors) and Fabulous (higher floors).

Spacious rooms flooded with natural light transform into golden havens at sunset and later entice you into the world of downtown thanks to views of the glowing (and growing) skyline. Interiors also feature warm wooden materials and curved features. A sleek bathroom can be closed off with a sliding door and includes a heavenly rain shower with refillable Comfort Zone toiletries – plus fluffy bathrobes and slippers.

Befitting of the music scene, you'll spot Marshall speakers and Pop Art-inspired pieces by Brooklyn-based studio FAILE – plus soft uplighting and glimmers of gold. Rooms are also equipped with a comfy desk space and plenty of plug points.

Facilities
The main restaurant offers American fare, though we had slow service at breakfast so recommend takeaway coffee at the Barista Parlor. Head to the rooftop bar PROOF for edgy industrial decor and sliding garage doors opening onto an expansive terrace. Further venues include steakhouse Carne Mare and the seasonal poolside Sunset Bar.

The hotel also has 12 event spaces, with indoor and outdoor areas, plus a co-working table in the lobby. Leisure facilities include an L-shaped pool, fitness centre and yoga lawn.

Attractions such as the Frist Art Museum or Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, meanwhile, are just a 15-minute walk away.

GOOD-TO-KNOW

The Spanish Steps (46 steps of wooden seating platforms) connect an outdoor pool with a live stage on the second floor.

VERDICT

W Nashville features rooms that live up to their 'Wonderful' moniker, complete with great work zones and nods to the characterful city.

BEST FOR

Work and play in the Music City

DON'T MISS

Golden sunset views (or dawn vistas for jet-lagged souls)

PRICE
From £280 per night for a standard queen room

CONTACT
300 12th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee, 37203;
+1 615 379 9000; marriott.com

IMAGES **COURTESY OF MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL**

HOTEL Review

WORDS
JESSICA PRUPAS

Hyde Johannesburg Rosebank

A hyped relaunch draws the cool crowd to Jo'burg's shopping district

What's it like?
When Ennismore – the hotel group that oversees trendy boltholes like The Hoxton, 25hours hotels and Mama Shelter – took over this 131-room property under its Hyde brand late last year, expectations were high. This first outpost from the boutique brand in Africa certainly doesn't disappoint: with its always-buzzing restaurant and café, as well as its prime location in Johannesburg's best shopping district, it's become a social hub for the city's cool set.

The lobby instantly sets the scene – decked in tasteful earth tones and decorated with stunning local artwork, it nods to African design with traditional textiles. Behind the reception desk, a colourful, Miro-esque mural specially commissioned from South African painter Hanna Noor Mahomed brings a dose of whimsy to the check-in process.

Rooms
Snug but stylish, the rooms and suites all boast a cool minimalistic design, offset by cheery pops of blush pink or baby blue. Every room is accented with eye-catching paintings or wall textiles sourced from up-and-coming talent.

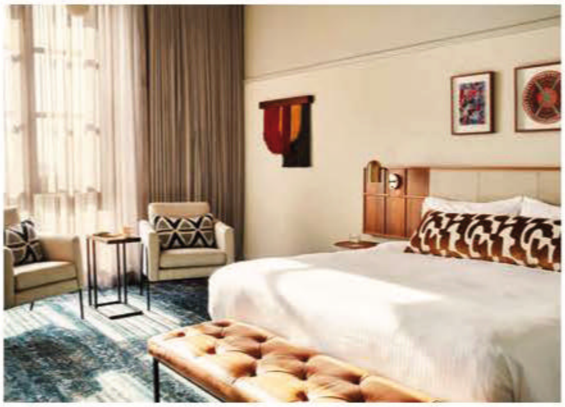
Nespresso machines and a minibar are tucked away in nooks, while bathrooms feature rain showers and products from organic skincare brand Antipodes.

The hotel has four room types – the smallest, General Admission, is only available as a king, whereas the larger VIP and Platinum rooms come as twins as well. The All Access king suite offers 44 sqm of space, plus a soaking tub and lounge area.

On my visit, the rooms were undergoing a spruce-up as part of the rebrand, adding features such as high-spec Sony ULT Field 7 speakers and objet d'art from local artisans.

Facilities
Most hotel gyms are one-room affairs with some dusty weights. Not so at Hyde – its 24-hour fitness centre occupies three floors, each with its own studio. The club-like ground-floor strength and lower-floor cardio suites are kitted out with neon lights and a pumping sound system, while the subdued 'focus' studio is on the rooftop terrace, where yoga practices are set to panoramic views.

For dining, the ground-floor Proud Coffee serves your urban office worker fare: barista coffee, fresh juices and pastries. Next door, the Proud Mary restaurant is a real feather in its cap, with a plant-laden dining room fringed by a terrace. The menus feature international fare – Belgian waffles in the morning, dhal fritters for lunch, and confit duck for dinner, if you fancy. Plus, a good showing from South African wineries.



GOOD-TO-KNOW

Steps from the hotel is the colossal Rosebank Mall – pick up wares from local designers and craftspeople.

VERDICT

After a savvy takeover, this is one of Johannesburg's buzziest boltholes, and a major coup for the hotel scene.

BEST FOR

Digital nomads who appreciate comfortable seating and good coffee.

DON'T MISS

Brunch at Proud Mary – specifically the Turkish eggs.

PRICE
VIP rooms start from 4,500 ZAR (£194) per night.

CONTACT
24 Cradock Ave, Rosebank,
Johannesburg, 2196,
South Africa; +27 10 023 2600;
hydehotels.com/johannesburg

IMAGES COURTESY OF ENNISMORE

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

MAIN: Caviar paired with butter and croissant **INSET:** The chocolate dessert

RC
REAL CAVIAR
LASARTE

Il Milione at Lasarte, Barcelona

A thrilling private dining experience awaits at the three Michelin-starred Lasarte restaurant

What's it like?
Chefs Martín Berasategui and Paolo Casagrande have long orchestrated stellar experiences, drawing inspiration from the finest local produce. But a different culinary journey inspired Il Milione – the legendary 24-year voyage of 13th-century Venetian explorer Marco Polo, later relayed in *Book of The Marvels of The World* (or *Il Milione*).

Casagrande is the brains behind the private dining experience, which transports guests from the Basque country via the Mediterranean to Asia and Latin America. Calling dinner an 'experience' may strike fear into those looking for a relaxing evening out, with potential shades of Ralph Fiennes in *The Menu*, a comedy horror film that satirises Michelin-starred establishments. However, the three-hour tasting menu, served in a private space overlooking the busy kitchen, was extraordinary.

The 'experience' starts with the interiors. Barcelona-based Makeat designed the dining area to stimulate all the senses, at every stage of the menu. Up to eight diners are seated in a dark room where atmospheric lighting synchronises with a custom soundtrack and different aromas as the dishes arrive at the table.

Bespoke tableware includes hand-blown Zwiesel glasses that feel impossibly light and fragile (definitely not ones to knock over). Each course, referred to as a "phase", features custom-made cutlery crafted in silver, ebony and copper.

Food and drink
Although the setting elicits enormous expectations for the food, Il Milione delivers on its promise and premise of taking diners around the world. Highlights included Berasategui's signature dish, a mille-feuille of foie gras with smoked eel and green apple – a masterful bite where textures and flavours harmonised to dazzling effect.

'Silk Delight' refers to Central Asia's Silk Road, and caviar took centre stage. A decadent individual tin was served alongside a flaky croissant and butter – a simple but perfect pairing – and accompanied by a glass of Krug Champagne.

The standout was 'Seduction', an unlikely combination where venison marinated in fermented beans (aka koji) is served with an orange and Espelette pepper compote, and finished with a translucent blueberry jus.

Desserts and petits fours were equally creative, notably 'Ode to chocolate' which featured the sweet treat in multiple iterations – including a gel, cremeux, tuile, mousse and crumb. This dish coincided with a final theatrical flourish, with the team revealing a window on a second, hitherto hidden, kitchen next to the dining table. The move elicited gasps of surprise – a common theme throughout a truly unique dinner.

Service
Ballet-like, with dishes presented in perfect unison, then described and contextualised.

VERDICT

Barcelona's fine dining scene is one of Europe's most progressive, but Il Milione at Lasarte takes it up a notch.

COST

The Il Milione menu is €490 euros per person without wine pairings.

CONTACT

Carrer de Mallorca, 259, L'Eixample, 08008 Barcelona, Spain
restaurantlasarte.com

GOOD -TO- KNOW

The menu is on offer for lunch and dinner Weds-Sat, and only available for exclusive reservations for two to eight people.

IMAGES **CARLOS ALLENDE**

FROM THE ARCHIVE

WORDS
TAMSIN COCKS

The travelling businesswoman

Battling misogyny in the 80s was no small hurdle for female business travellers

HAVE WE SHATTERED the glass ceiling? No. Is the gender pay gap resolved? Also no. But compared to the 80s – we've come a long way.

This month, we retrieve an article by Susan Marling from *Business Traveller*'s March 1983 issue, which documents the plight of the travelling businesswoman.

Back then, female business travellers were “still the exception, rather than the rule” – portrayed in the media either as “dowdy dowagers buttoned into sensible clothes, or pencil-thin, shiny-lipped divorcees on impossible heels”.

Their existence confused, shocked or offended fellow travellers, particularly outside Europe and the US. “With women most usually on the sidelines offering service – female business travellers get a raw deal,” wrote Marling.

Hotel horrors

Female executives faced frustratingly sexist approaches. Gisela Burg, managing director of Expodus, recounted the challenge of convincing hotel staff in Japan that she was travelling *sans man* for business – despite multiple clarifications, the room was still booked under the name “Mr Burg”.

A few hotels claimed to take a more feminist approach, but their efforts appeared patronising at best. The female-only hotel The Barbizon in New York billed itself as “the nice girl's home away from home” until 1981, while the Holiday Inn, Baltimore proudly announced female-focused facilities such as wine and cheese baskets or shower caps – not exactly the number one requirement for a busy executive.

According to the article: “One of the problems most frequently encountered by single women in hotels is that they can be taken for tarts.” Rosemary Shovelton, an executive for Philip Morris, described how she was escorted by two security men who suspected her to be soliciting for a different kind of business.

Business Traveller
the international travel magazine
March 1983 £1.25
Free Supplement Air Fares Guide
Skirting the globe
The plight of the travelling businesswoman
The other British airways
How to slash your travelling costs

WORLDLY WOMEN
Women faced discrimination simply for daring to go out alone

Always the Second Sex:
the plight of the travelling businesswoman

What they say...

‘Some “old-school” waiters avoided taking money from a woman’

Dining dilemmas

God forbid a solo female business traveller ventures out of her hotel room for a bite to eat. Journalist Jill Crawshaw reported her frustrations at trying to order half a bottle of wine with her meal in Canada, which required negotiations with the head waiter plus an official letter of invitation before she could get served, while Gloria Ward from Thomson Holidays was evicted from Trader Vic's at the Hilton in London as “they don't serve women at the bar”.

Even if a male colleague was present, ordering was still tinged with antiquity. Two sets of menus were occasionally offered, and only men were granted the one with prices – the assumption being that they would pick up the bill. Tipping came with its own challenges – some “old-school” waiters avoided taking money from a woman.

Gender etiquette

Catherine Stott, the late women's editor at the *Sunday Telegraph*, revealed how her presence flummoxed Japanese colleagues on a business trip, as typically, they would entertain associates with a trip to a brothel. A female-friendly brothel was eventually sourced, but Stott declined the invitation (much to their relief – this brothel was apparently much more expensive).

Then there were the unwanted advances of men. The author recounts a personal incident in the Philippines where a government official transgressed professional boundaries to enquire where she was staying.

Interestingly, Marling writes: “I don't believe the solution to these problems is a return to the old days when there were special carriages for women on trains… I think it's sad that there is now operating in London a taxi service called Labyris which carries only female passengers, and whose drivers are all women”.

Given that we still haven't eradicated the need for enhanced safety for female travellers, perhaps this service was actually rather ahead of its time.

Female business travellers continue to face challenges that their male counterparts don't, but at least we can comfortably book a hotel room and order a meal for one without raising eyebrows! BT

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